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Double Gold for China

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The end of tyranny

Summer of Chess in St. Louis

Matthew Sadler
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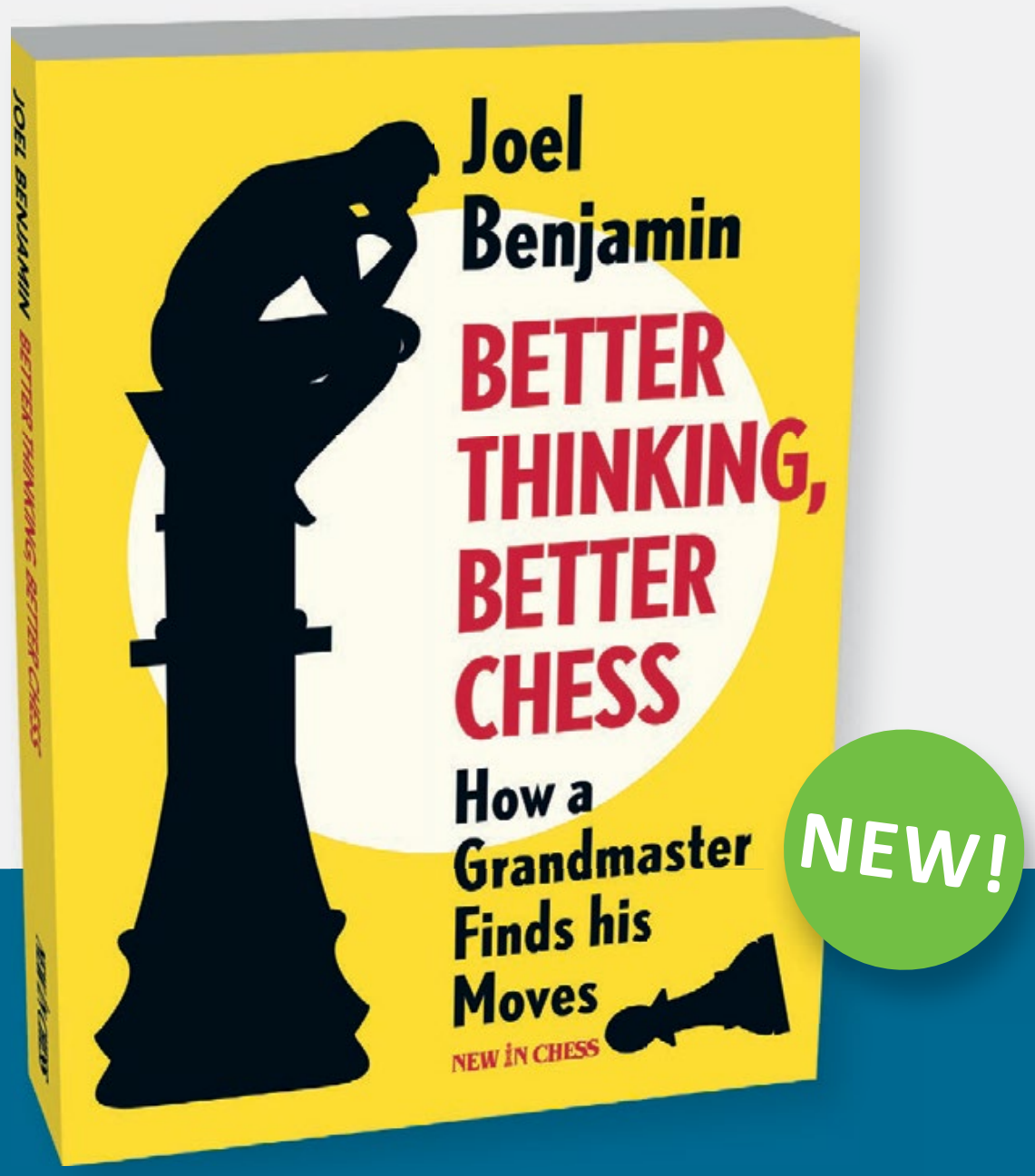

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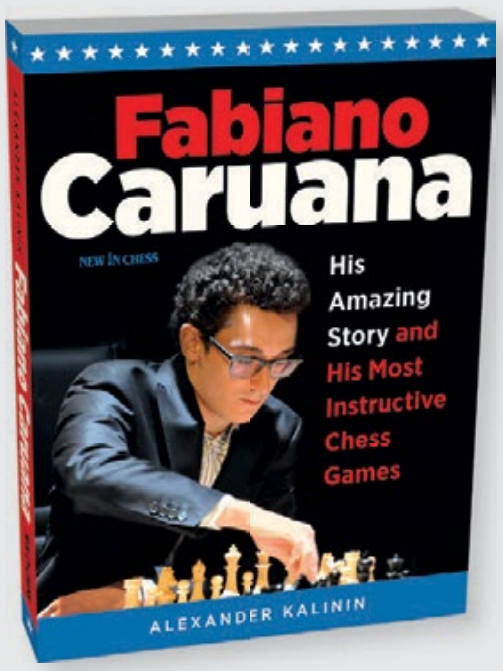

"Informative, well laid out, easy to read and just delightful. Read it before the World Championship match starts."
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"The games are well-annotated offering variations where needed, but also plenty of explanatory prose. Kalinin presents two smooth victories by Fabiano in [the Berlin Defence] (including a win over Carlsen) that illustrate his principled and crisp play quite nicely and suggest the World Championship match this fall should be something special."
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Neumann, Hirschfeld and Suhle. ***19th Century Berlin Chess Biographies with 711 Games.*** Hans Renette *and* Fabrizio Zavatarelli. 2018, $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 384pp., 66 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-7379-0. Around 1860 a wave of young Berliners, including Berthold Suhle, Philipp Hirschfeld and Gustav Neumann, came to rank among the world's best. Little has heretofore been written about their lives (richly revealed) and games (analyzed in detail). Newly published.

Kurt Richter. ***A Chess Biography with 499 Games.*** Alan McGowan. 2018, $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), ca. 90 photographs, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-6906-9. This very large-scale overview of Richter's life (1900–1969) and games sheds light on a sharp and inventive player and influential editor, with much never-before-seen material. Fall 2018.

Tal, Petrosian, Spassky and Korchnoi. ***A Chess Multibiography with 206 Games.*** Andrew Soltis. $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), photographs, 206 games, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-7146-8. Describes the intense rivalry—and collaboration—of the four players who created the golden era when USSR chess players dominated the world. More than 200 annotated games are included, along with personal details—many for the first time in English. Late 2018.

Louis Paulsen. ***A Chess Biography with 670 Games.*** Hans Renette. $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), ca. 100 photographs, 670 games, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-7195-6. No chess player of the 19th century had a longer, more varied career—nor more slashing attack games—than Henry Edward Bird (1829–1908). This is a detailed account of his personal life and full coverage of his vigorous feats. In production.

Fred Reinfeld. ***A Chess Biography.*** Alex Dunne. $45 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), bibliography, index, 978-1-4766-7654-8. Fred Reinfeld's name is known to almost every chess player in the United States. But his accomplishments are not so well known. He was an accomplished author, respected numismatist and an editor or major contributor to almost every major chess magazine of the thirties through the forties. In production.

Go For It! 30" × 30" oil on linen, Louis Munroe 2016 (dwaynesueno@gmail.com)

British Chess Literature to 1914. ***A Handbook for Historians.*** Tim Harding. 2018, $49.95 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 399 pp., 72 photographs, 23 games, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-1-4766-6839-0. Exhaustive coverage of almost 600 chess columns and periodicals from 1813 on and 150 years of books. "Seldom a chess book has impressed so much...a must have"—*Chessbook Reviews.*

A World of Chess. ***Its Development and Variations through Centuries and Civilizations.*** Jean-Louis Cazaux *and* Rick Knowlton. 2017, $49.95 softcover (17.8 × 25.4 cm), 408pp., 71 illus., 297 diagrams, 9 maps, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9427-9. The Persian and Arab game familiar for 500 years; similar games going back 1500 years still played; evolution of strategic board games especially in India, China and Japan; more recent chess variants (board sizes, new pieces, 3-D etc.). "Definitive"—IM John Donaldson (*JeremySilman.com*); "impressive...one of the most interesting reads on the history of chess!"—*Chessbook Reviews*; "thoroughly researched...a wonderful and unique reference"—*Mind's Eye Press.*

W.H.K. Pollock. ***A Chess Biography with 524 Games.*** Olimpiu G. Urcan *and* John S. Hilbert. 2017, $65 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 508pp., 68 illustrations, diagrams, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, index, 978-0-7864-5868-4. Englishman Pollock (1859–1896) played in many important American events of the 1800s. "A perfect marriage of subject, author and publisher. Open at random and be entertained."—*Kingpin Chess Magazine;* Honorable Mention, Book of the Year Award—*Chess Journalists of America.*

H.E. Bird. ***A Chess Biography with 1,198 Games.*** Hans Renette. 2016, $75 library binding (21.9 × 28.5 cm), 608pp., 1,198 games, 376 diagrams, 85 illustrations, tables, appendices, notes, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-7578-0. No 19th century player had a longer career—nor more slashing attack games—than Henry Edward Bird (1829–1908). A detailed account of his personal life and vigorous feats. Book of the Year Award—*Chess Journalists of America.*

Vera Menchik. ***A Biography of the First Women's World Chess Champion, with 350 Games.*** Robert B. Tanner. 2016, $49.95 library binding (18.4 × 26 cm), 328pp., 21 photographs, appendices, bibliography, indexes, 978-0-7864-9602-0. The first woman to compete on an equal basis with the top male players. She dominated women's chess for 17 years and was killed by a Nazi bomb. "Impressive...fantastic"—*Chessbook Reviews.*

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Contents

'To become a good chess player, I need to broaden my horizons in other areas.'

Note to our subscribers: The back of our previous issue, 2018/6, erroneously stated 2018/7. We apologize for any inconvenience this mistake may have caused.

8 Under the Flyover
One of the world's most unusual chess clubs.

10 NIC's Café
Fortunately, Latvia's Minister of Finance has a chess background. And could that be the Game of the Year?

12 Champions of the world
The most successful countries at the Chess Olympiad.

13 Fair & Square
Why is it that Keith Richards always loved the piano?

14 Double Gold for China
In a nail-biting finish China became the big winner of the 43th Olympiad in Batumi. In a unique double strike, the Chinese were victorious both in the Open and the Women's competition.

19 Celeb64: Charles Aznavour

26 The Best of Batumi
With teams from 180 different countries, the 43rd Olympiad in Batumi was a gathering of old and new friends from all corners of the world.

42 Parham Maghsoodloo
'In 2022 I will play the world title match.' Says Iran's big hope.

56 Short Stories
He was one of the candidates in the FIDE elections, but withdrew his candidacy shortly before the vote. Our columnist explains why.

58 Summer of Chess
In another month packed with chess, the St. Louis Chess Club hosted the last two stops of the Grand Chess Tour. Tatev Abrahamyan allows our readers a peek behind the scenes of the most active chess club in the world.

74 Judit Polgar
Is Fabiano Caruana the opponent that Magnus Carlsen had been hoping for?

77 Maximize Your Tactics
Find the right moves.

78 Searching for Fabiano Caruana
He is the first American-born player since Bobby Fischer to play for the chess crown. And his rapidly growing fan base has good reason to believe in his chances. John Henderson profiles Magnus Carlsen's challenger

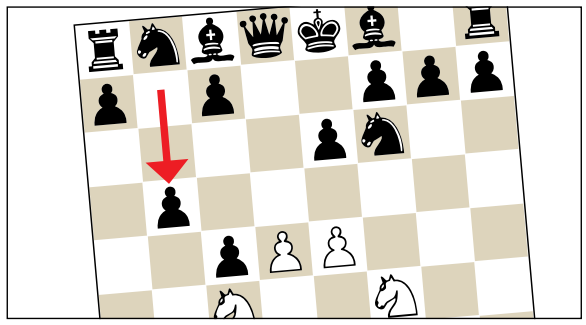
84 Secrets of Opening Surprises
A 'Fab' surprise by Fabiano Caruana.

88 The Blitz Whisperer
What if the World Championship match is decided in blitz games? Maxim Dlugy provides insights and advice.

94 Sadler on Books
A golden age of chess books, that's what we live in. Matthew Sadler underscores his belief with a star-spangled review of 'the best way for chess fans to get to know Challenger Fabiano Caruana' and more.

98 Batumi Watch
Jan Timman had a great time watching the key games of the Olympiad.

106 Just Checking
What is Jan-Krzysztof Duda's life motto?



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SUBSCRIPTIONS: p. 100 COLOPHON: p. 104

Under the Flyover

It must rate as one of the world's most unusual chess clubs, but the street hangout that grew under the Gariahat flyover from humble pavement beginnings near Golpark in 1985, has now attained the look and legitimacy of a club with 13 tables bearing laminated boards, arched lamp post and 26 stools laid out for anyone who wants to play a game.

Regulars at the Gariahat Chess Club range from government officials to Slumdog Millionaire-like street urchins, all with a shared love of the game, despite the obvious disadvantage of the all-day commotion, noise and air pollution around one of Kolkata's (formerly Calcutta) busier intersections.

The club originally started out as an informal group of residents,

shopkeepers and passers-by who would stop for a chess break - but it became ever-more popular with the rise of Viswanathan Anand. It wasn't until 2006 that this daily assemblage of chess nerds metamorphosed into a registered club that 'opens' around 3 pm every day. There were fears in early September that the popularity of the club could be hit after the nearby Majerhat Bridge collapse in the city, with several fatalities. But the tragic incident didn't deter the regulars. 'Accidents can happen anytime, anywhere, so what's the point in thinking something will happen and miss out on life? I'm not scared; I'll spend my evenings under this flyover come what may,' said club regular Biswajit Saha to the media, adding, 'We are chess players and we love the game.' ■

What are the odds?

As Captain Louis Renault would say, 'I am shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!' No, not at Rick's cafe, but rather during the upcoming World Chess Championship match in London between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana.

World Chess (formerly known as Agon) recently announced that they had joined forces with Unibet, the premier Malta-based online gambling operator, for exclusive betting rights for the November title-decider. Unibet previously sponsored the World Rapid and Blitz Championship in 2015, but this is the first time in its 132-year history that the World Chess Championship match has signed a betting partner.

Unibet has seen a growing interest in betting on big chess events.

Richard Østrøm, country manager for Unibet Norway, said: 'Since Magnus Carlsen became world champion, we have seen a large and growing interest in betting on big chess tournaments.' He added: 'We believe that this year's World Championship showdown between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana will establish chess as a permanent fixture in betting.'

Miami Twice

They say in Tinseltown that serendipity plays a big part in how a movie gets made – and certainly serendipity played its part in the production and inspiration behind yet another new 'feel-good' Hollywood chess movie due out late next year where the kids are the true story.

South Florida entrepreneur Carla Berkowitz was flipping through the *Miami Herald's Tropic* magazine one morning in 1997 when she came across an article that chronicled the lives of students at Miami Jackson Senior High School as they competed in statewide and national chess tournaments. Led by coach Mario Martinez, Jackson's team of mostly low-income, minority students became one of the best teams in the nation.

The story resonated so deeply with Berkowitz that she called the coach and eventually bought the life rights to the tale in hopes of someday producing a movie. And while Berkowitz worked with a writer on the script, Hollywood producer Scott Rosenfelt says he unknowingly stumbled across the same story. On a trip to Miami in search of funding, he also discovered that Berkowitz was already working away on a film about the chess champs.

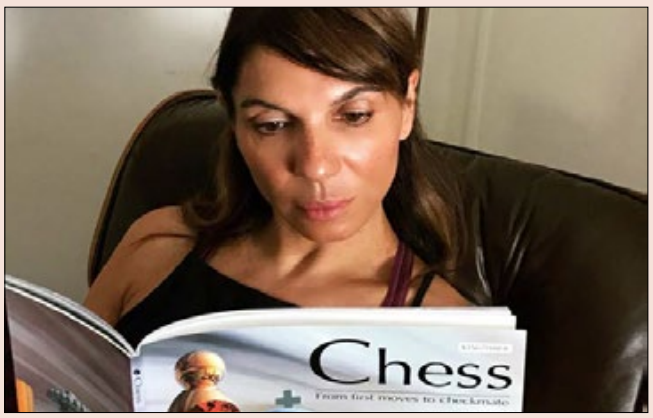
Eventually, the two decided to join forces to tackle the project together and now, more than a decade later, their new movie, *Critical Thinking* (named for Coach Martinez's chess class), began filming in Miami in late September, with actor John Leguizamo as the team's coach, and is expected to be released in the fall of 2019. Berkowitz, who befriended the chess players years ago, hopes their story will resonate with audiences the same way it did with her. 'This is what people write fiction about, and here it is, all true.'

John Leguizamo confessed that it had always been his wish to play a teacher.

Sacre Blue!

In Houston, Texas, the River Oaks Chamber Orchestra kicked off their 2018-19 concert season with their 'Games People Play' theme. And on opening night, on 21 September, at the Miller Outdoor Theatre, the dynamic ensemble unveiled the world premiere of Maxime Goulet's *Checkmate* – a new score all based on the opening game of the 1996 match in Philadelphia between IBM's Deep Blue and Garry Kasparov.

Offering audiences a concert experience like that of no other, *Checkmate* is unique in being an interactive musical game of chess between ROCO's full 40-piece orchestra – led by conductor Paul Watkins – and world-renowned pianist Lara Downes. With the very singular Downes representing Kasparov and ROCO playing the role of Deep Blue, the sequence of musical themes followed the chess moves of this famous game – the first time in a match that a reigning world champion had lost to a computer – with animation that contained actual footage of the match being projected above the stage.



World-renowned pianist Lara Downes brushing up on her chess before a concert.

There were rave reviews and plenty of applauses from the appreciative audience on the opening night – and

even Garry Kasparov himself offered everyone involved in the musical project a 'good luck' tweet.

Dirty laundry

In recent years, the whole of the Baltic banking system has come under serious scrutiny after gaining unwanted attention for what the media has dubbed the 'Russian Laundromat', with billions of dollars in dirty money from corrupt former Soviet republics being systematically funnelled to Europe. The U.S. Treasury Department has intervened, and heavy censure has also come from institutions like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Latvia's Minister of Finance Dana Reizniece-Ozola focuses like a Grandmaster.

Interestingly, behind the intended financial clean-up in Latvia, there operates the strategic mind of a chess grandmaster, one who attracted worldwide attention two years ago after she sensationally beat Hou Yifan, the Women's No.1, at the Baku Olympiad!

Key to the crackdown behind Latvia's money launders is none other than Minister of Finance Dana Reizniece-Ozola, who is also one of her country's leading WGMs. In September, Reizniece-Ozola was the subject of a major profile in the online magazine *ozy.com*, with reporter Dan Peleschuk claiming she is a game-changer in politics, and one who many speculate could well become her country's Prime minister in the not-too-distant future.

Latvia's reputation has taken a thrashing over the unwanted attention of money laundering. Says Peleschuk: 'It's fallen on Reizniece-Ozola, a charismatic mother of four with serious political ambitions, to help repair it. Luckily, she's not easily discouraged: "I've been very well trained by chess to stay focused", she jokes.'

Game of the Year?

As you can see in this issue, the Olympiad produced a fine harvest of truly brilliant games. How to play through Ding Liren's masterpiece against Duda without subdued or outright oohs and aahs? Or not be mesmerized by Sulskis' daredevil play against Jobava?

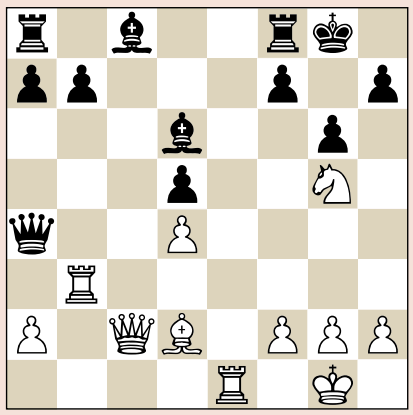
Yet, as the last months of the year are near, we suggest a further candidate for Game of the Year, a brilliancy played during the Kortchnoi Memorial Open in St. Petersburg this summer. A tactical tsunami of scintillating sacrifices that concluded with a brilliant king-hunt leading to mate.

The name of the victim was Saveliy Golubov, an 18-year-old Russian IM. The name of the creative attacker was David Paravyan, a 20-year-old Russian GM. Enjoy the tactical pyrotechnics starting with 20.♘xh7 and culminating in Paravyan's stunning showstopper of 24.♕c7!!.

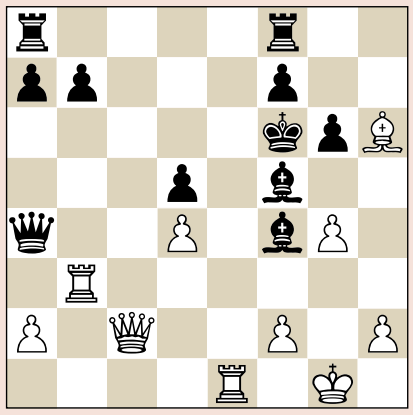
David Paravyan
Saveliy Golubov
St. Petersburg 2018
Petroff Defence

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3 ♗d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.c4 c6 9.♕b3 dxc4 10.♗xc4 ♘d7 11.♖e1 ♘df6 12.♘bd2 ♘xd2 13.♗xd2 ♕b6 14.♕d3 ♕xb2 15.♖ab1 ♕a3 16.♕c2 ♘d5 17.♖b3 ♕a4 18.♗xd5 cxd5 19.♘g5! g6

David Paravyan: a tactical tsunami of scintillating sacrifices.



20.♘xh7! The loose black queen is the key to this imaginative and brilliant king hunt. **20...♗f5** Of course, if 20...♔xh7?, 21.♖h3+ wins the loose queen. **21.♘f6+ ♔g7 22.♗h6+! ♔xf6 23.g4!!** Threatening 24.g5 mate! **23...♗f4** There's no other move, as 23...♗xc2 24.♖f3+ ♗f5 25.g5 is mate. With 23...♗f4, Golubov must have thought his opponent had simply miscalculated the attack – but there is one unbelievable move he'd missed.



24.♕c7!! This stunning queen sacrifice takes the brilliancy into another dimension. **24...♗xh6** There's no other way to meet the twin threats of 25.g5 and mate and 25.♕xf4 mating. **25.♕e5+ ♔g5 26.h4+ ♔xh4 27.♖h3+! ♔g5** If 27...♔xh3 28.♕g3 mate. **28.♕e7+** Black resigned, faced with the forced mate 28...f6 29.♕e3+ ♔xg4 30.♕g3 mate. ■

They Are the Champions of the World

Nearly every country has played in the Chess Olympiads, but only 22 have managed to take home team medals, and only 10 have taken home golds. Several countries have profited from the break-up of the former Soviet Union, notably Armenia and Ukraine, which won every team gold medal from 2004 through 2012.

More than 120 countries have won individual medals, but the possibility of a player from a lesser-known chess country earning such an honour may be past, as beginning with the 38th Olympiad in Dresden, Germany, in 2008, board prizes began to be calculated by rating performance instead of overall winning percentage.

DYLAN LOEB McCLAIN

Cumulative total number of individual medals won by each country

*Includes the former East Germany

Cumulative total number of medals won by each country

Gold Silver Bronze

Figures exclude the first two unofficial Olympiads in Paris in 1924 and in Budapest in 1926, the events in Munich in 1936 and in Tripoli in 1976, but include the competition in Haifa in 1976.

Germany 1 1 3
Sweden 1 1
Estonia 1
Czechoslovakia (now Slovakia and the Czech Republic) 2 1
England 3 3
Denmark 1
Netherlands 1 1
Poland 1 2 3
Ukraine 2 2 3
Hungary 3 7 2
Bosnia & Herzegovina 1
Bulgaria 1
Yugoslavia** 1 6 6

Soviet Union 18 1
Russia 6 3 3
United States 6 6 8
Its gold-medal total includes the 1976 Olympiad, when the Soviet Union and other Eastern Bloc countries boycotted.
Israel 1 1
Uzbekistan 1
India 1
China 2 1
It has won two of the last three Olympiads.
Argentina 3 2
Its three silver medals were in consecutive Olympiads – 1950, 1952 and 1954.
Armenia 3 3
It won three of four consecutive Olympiads, in 2006, 2008 and 2012.

** Which are now the countries of Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Kosovo, Montenegro, and Macedonia.

Fair & Square

Lennox Lewis: 'If you teach a kid how to play chess he isn't gonna go out and and rob somebody or do something bad, because he is thinking five moves ahead.' *(Speaking with Good Morning Britain host, Piers Morgan, on the benefits of teaching chess to children, as the two reminisced about their chess rivalry during their time on The Celebrity Apprentice USA)*

Keith Richards: 'I've always loved playing the piano. I think one of the reasons, being a guitar player, your instrument is in a strange, a different position. The piano, to me, is laid out like a chess game.' *(The legendary guitarist of the Rolling Stones, in his Netflix documentary, 'Under the Influence')*

Levon Aronian: 'It's risky, but as they say in Russia, the one who doesn't risk doesn't drink champagne!' *(On playing 1.e4 to beat Sergey Karjakin in the opening round of the Sinquefield Cup)*

John Meacham: 'A central thing to remember here is that ever since 1962, which was the school prayer decision, the Supreme Court has been at the center of the conservative agenda for power. This was clearly advanced as well by Roe v. Wade, but you didn't have these kind of confirmation battles. You have them now, because every seat is seen as a chess piece in the struggle for power.' *(The Pulitzer Prize-winning biographer, speaking on CBS News on the latest US Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh)*

Viktor Kortchnoi: 'It is a gross overstatement, but in chess, it can be said I play against my opponent over the board and against myself on the clock.'

WIM Ivette Garcia Morales: 'Don't be afraid to fail, be afraid not to try.' *(The leading Mexican woman player's inspirational social media message, on the eve of leaving for the Batumi Chess Olympiad)*

Indian proverb: 'Chess is a sea in which a gnat may drink and an elephant may bathe.'

Nigel Davies: 'I might add that if a gnat studies in the right way, he may eventually become an elephant.' *(The English GM on the Indian proverb)*

Daniel Lozakovich: 'I no longer take part in chess tournaments, which I used to do. There I learned how to perceive and stand long tension curves, which is very useful for me as a violinist.' *(The 17-year-old Swedish violinist in an interview on his debut album with Bach concertos that he recorded for the legendary DGG label)*

Magnus Carlsen: 'Without the element of enjoyment, it is not worth trying to excel at anything.'

Julie Burchill: 'My people have been treated like dumb pawns in the European game for many decades.' *(The English journalist, writer, broadcaster and self-described 'militant feminist', during a recent interview on BBC's Newsnight, explaining why she voted for Brexit)*

Gov. Henry McMaster: 'We're in a very deadly and important game of chess with Hurricane Florence. What team South Carolina is doing is staying one move ahead.' *(The South Carolina governor, as he readied his state ahead of Hurricane Florence in early September)*

Woody Allen: 'To me, chess is like a ballet, except there's no music, no choreography, and the dancers kill each other.'

Alexander Grischuk: 'For me it's strange to be in this building, that is called "Hall of Fame". I feel like there should be a separate building called "Hall of Shame".' *(After the opening ceremony of the Sinquefield Cup, held in the Hall of Fame in St. Louis)*

Stormy Daniels: 'Unless he's had a penis transplant, then I'm pretty sure that's a checkmate.' *(Speaking to BBC Newsnight's Emily Maitlis in early October on her 'kiss and tell' book 'Full Disclosure', that reveals an alleged affair between the former porn actress and Donald Trump that includes a very graphic description of an intimate part of his anatomy)*

Chinese men and women edge out closest rivals

Double Gold for China

In an ultra-close and nail-biting finish, followed by frantic tiebreak calculations, China became the big winner of the 43th Olympiad in Batumi. In a unique double strike, the Chinese were victorious both in the Open and the Women's competition. What's more, both their top boards, Ding Liren and Women's World Champion Ju Wenjun, also claimed individual gold medals. **PENG ZHAOQIN**, three-time Chinese and 14-time Dutch champion, reports.

The news of the double victory quickly spread all over China. The successful chess players found themselves in the evening news of CCTV, China's biggest broadcasting network, and on the front page of *The People's Daily*, the biggest newspaper in China and the official newspaper of the Chinese Communist Party. The news of their win, complete with a photograph, appeared on the first page together with an article about President Xi Jinping's ideas about the destiny of the human community!

Head coach Ye Jiangchuan (in dark suit) with the Chinese men's and women's team at the closing ceremony in the Batumi State Musical Centre.

China's double victory was front-page news back home where The People's Daily, the official newspaper of the Communist Party, had a photo of the winning teams next to an article about President Xi Jinping's ideas about the destiny of the human community.

'Our players fought on in difficult moments and never gave up. We are in ecstasy.'

It was the first time since 1986, when in Dubai the Soviet Union did the same, that a country won both sections, the Open – formerly known as the men's – and the Women's competition. China's head coach Ye Jiangchuang couldn't suppress his happiness: 'Our players were incredible. They fought on in difficult moments and never gave up. We are in ecstasy.' The coach of the women's team, Yu Shaoteng, had never expected such a miracle either. Two weeks earlier, they would have happily settled for one golden team and a second or third place for the other team.

The men's team, led by Ding Liren, won the title for the second time. Recovering from a hip fracture (from falling down from a bike four months ago during the Norway Chess tournament), the Board 1 player still needed the support of crutches to walk. 'It was all right', he laconically commented, 'It gave me lots of time to sit and think carefully about all kinds of positions. Besides, with my mother by my side, I didn't lose a single game.' Apart from the youngest player on the team, 19-year-old Wei Yi, who only scored 50%, the other members, Yu Yangyi, Bu Xiangzhi and Li Chao, also put in solid performances. Just like his wife Huang Qian, who was playing Board 3 in the women's team, Bu Xiangzhi didn't lose a single game.

The big surprise, however, came from the women's team, from which two former World Champions were absent. World number one Hou Yifan remained in England, pursuing her university studies in Oxford, while Tan Zhongyi could not come for personal reasons. The burden to defend the first board fell on reigning World Champion Ju Wenjun. She had to lead a team with two young mothers, Shen Yang and Huang Qian, Lei Tingjie and the current Chinese Champion, 22-year-old Zai Mo. Showing strong will and extraordinary fighting spirit, they won one gold (Ju Wenjun) and two silver medals (Huang Qian and Lei Tingjie). 'All efforts paid off!' they happily concluded.

Ye Jiangchuan

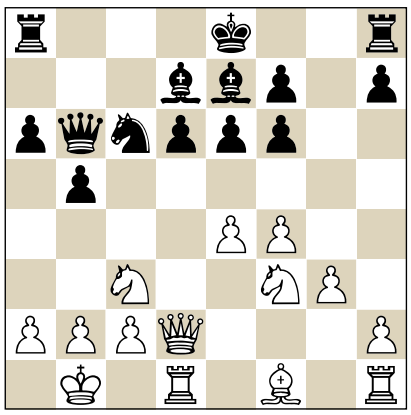
The Chinese success stems from collective work. An intense 10-day training session for all team members before the Olympiad provided focus. In addition, the coach of the men's team, Xu Jun, and Yu Shaoteng, chief coach Ye Jiangchuan, were also constantly present. Ye is the General Secretary of the Chinese Chess Federation. He has a lot of paperwork to do but 'my heart is with the game', as he says. Still, there may be some more paperwork waiting for Ye, as he was nominated as FIDE Vice-President by the new FIDE President Arkady Dvorkovich.

Ye Jiangchuan is a very respected figure, and it is my belief that he is one of the major forces behind the Chinese successes. His entire life has been committed to chess – as a player, a coach and a leader. In the early 1990s, as China's number one GM, he gave up his personal aspirations to support Xie Jun in her quest to become Women's World Champion. 'It was a time when we spent around 10 hours per day on training', he remembers.

After Xie Jun had achieved her goal, Ye became a team leader, and for years he worked to establish the Chinese Chess League. Since 2005, dozens of top grandmasters from all over the world have been playing in this strong league. 'It was the foundation of many new Chinese champions', Ye believes. The growing popularity of the game also brought many sponsors, and the Chinese Federation increasingly organizes top matches and tournaments with GMs from China and abroad.

During the Olympiad in Batumi, we had several conversations, as Ye Jiangchuan divided his time between the playing hall and the Expo hall with the election booths and various book shops that had his warm attention. He complained that the old Russian chess books had become expensive, but he still bought them. 'From time to time I need to give lectures to the youngsters in the national team.'

As the games of the day progressed, he would become nervous. 'Can you hold my mobile for a moment? I have to go inside to have a look at the games.' During the match China – Czechoslovakia, Ye criticized Wei Yi's play against Stocek. Wei Yi had reacted unfortunately in an unfamiliar position and Ye believed 13. g3 was a mistake. 'I think White should have played 13.♗d3 and then g4, h4 and g5, opening up Black's king's position.' The expert at work!



Wei Yi-Stocek
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (5)
China-Czech Republic
position after 13.g3

China lost 1-3; their only defeat in the tournament.

Brilliancy

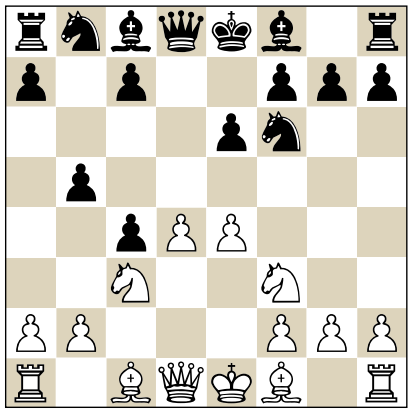
China's number one, Ding Liren, the first ever Chinese to cross the 2800 barrier, showed outstanding play on Board 1, winning the gold medal with a performance of 2873. His best game was against Jan-Krzysztof Duda from Poland in Round 10, a brilliancy for the ages.

NOTES BY
Ding Liren

Ding Liren
Jan-Krzysztof Duda
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (10)
Queen's Gambit Accepted

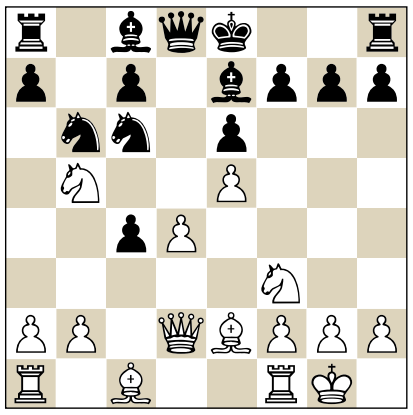
In Round, 10 we met Poland, the leaders at the time, and I played White against Duda. I didn't feel I was in a must-win situation, because, after all, winning one game would be enough.

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 dxc4 5.e4 b5



He repeats this risky line, which he had also played against Wojtaszek, his teammate, in this year's Polish Championship.

6.e5 ♘d5 7.♘xb5 ♘b6 8.♗e2 ♘c6 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♕d2



This was the new move that I had prepared.

So far, mainly 10.♗e3 had been played here. But this will focus the play on the queenside, when I believe that with accurate play Black should be able to equalize. I believe that with the pawn structure d4-e5, White should try to attack on the kingside. 10.♕d2 is also the engine's choice.

10...0-0 11.♕f4

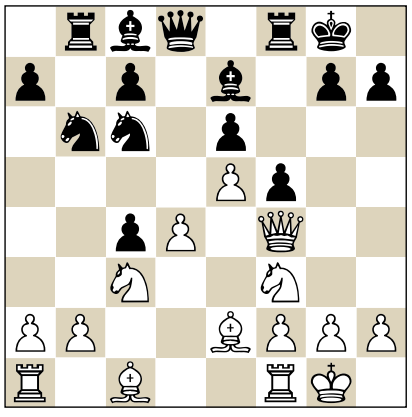
Following my plan.

11...♖b8 12.♘c3

So far we had been blitzing out our moves and now, after thinking for three minutes, he surprised me with his next move, which I guess was still part of his preparation.

12...f5

I had only prepared 12...♘b4, and now I thought for 20 minutes.



13.♕g3

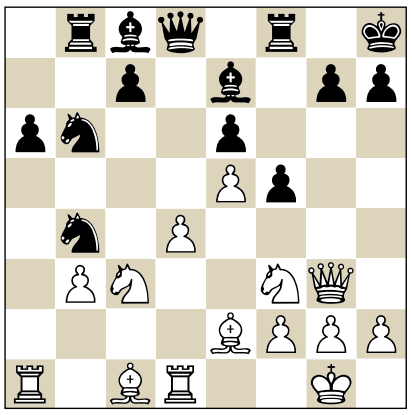
I have to keep the tension in the centre and to try and improve my pieces. I am threatening ♗h6 and perhaps ♘g5. Also, he cannot take on d4: 13...♘xd4 14.♘xd4 ♕xd4 15.♗h6 ♖f7 16.♗h5, and White wins a piece. I first checked what happens if I take: 13.exf6 ♖xf6 14.♕e4 ♗b7 15.♗g5 ♖g6 16.♗xe7 ♘xe7, and Black is fine.

13...♔h8 A very natural move.

14.♖d1 ♘b4 15.b3

This is what I had calculated when I played 13.♕g3.

15...cxb3 16.axb3 a6

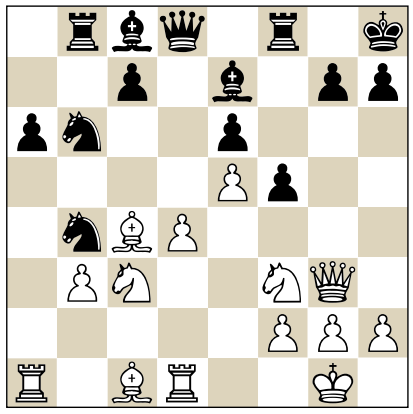


Here he had caught up in time again; we both had spent some 25 minutes

here. I felt I had a pleasant position, but I had to find a plan to continue my attack. If there are further exchanges on the queenside, the position might become drawish, so I felt that moves like 17.♘a4 or 17.♗a3 were not so powerful and went:

17.♗c4

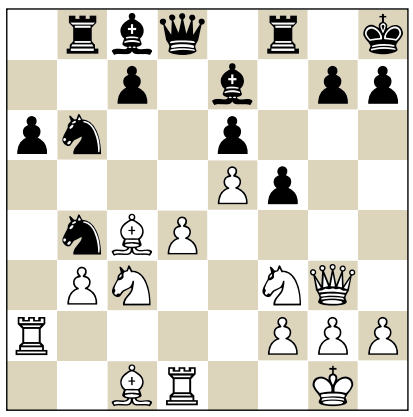
With the idea to prevent ...♗b7 and possibly planning ♘e2 and ♘f4 (and perhaps ♘h5 next). I was very happy about this move, but with clear confidence he played a move I had not expected and which felt like a draw offer.



17...♘c2 If he takes with 17...♘xc4 18.bxc4, I get a strong pawn centre: 18...♗b7 19.♘e2 ♕d7 20.d5 exd5 21.♗b2, with a clear advantage.

18.♖a2 Better, but hard to decide on, was 18.♖b1 ♘xc4 (after 18...♕d7 19.d5 is strong) 19.bxc4 ♖xb1 20.♘xb1 ♗b7, and now I would have to find 21.d5 exd5 22.cxd5 ♗xd5 23.♘c3 c6 24.e6, and White has some kind of advantage. This was objectively the best way to continue, but it's not something that you find easily during the game.

18...♘b4 19.♖a1 ♘c2 20.♖a2 ♘b4



NEW IN CHESS

Getting more popular by the day. Ding Liren signs a chess board shortly before the start of his last game. In Batumi China's number one extended his unbeaten streak in classical chess to 'close to 90 games'.

Having repeated moves, I tried to check the other boards, but I could not see Li Chao's position on Board 4 (and I could not get up and go there, because I cannot move without crutches) and I could only see the other two games, which looked more or less equal, so I tried to play on. But what I played was not the most accurate move. I should have met ♖b1 with ...♘c2, as just pointed out.

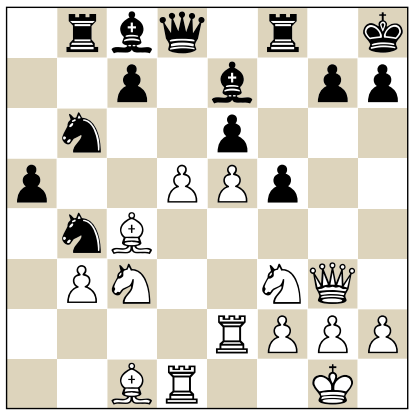
21.♖e2

I decided to put the rook on e2, because I was focused on the d5-break.

21...a5

A very natural reaction. He wants to take on c4 and play ...♗a6. So I must act immediately and I had calculated the d5 push when I decided to put my rook on e2. I was not sure if I would have enough compensation, but I reasoned that I had two choices: it's not about playing d5 or not, it's about making a draw or not. If I don't want to have a draw by repetition, I have to play d5 and see what happens. But I was pretty confident that at least I would have some attack.

22.d5 Played after a long think. I must say this is very risky.



22...exd5

To my mind it was better to take with the knight, because it would keep White from playing e6. So, 22...♘4xd5 23.♘xd5 ♘xd5, and now White has a wide range of options, but none of them leads to an advantage: 24.♘d4 (24.♖a2 c6; 24.♗xd5 exd5 (24...♗b7 is even better) 25.e6 ♖xb3 26.♗b2 ♖xb2 27.♖xb2 ♗xe6, and this is good for Black) 24...♖b6 (a key move, protecting the c6-square) 25.♖ed2 (with the idea of ♘xe6), and maybe White can keep the balance.

23.e6

Batumi (open) 2018

		Pts	Tiebreak
1	China	18	372.5
2	USA	18	360.5
3	Russia	18	354.5
4	Poland	17	390
5	England	17	340
6	India	16	388
7	Vietnam	16	379.5
8	Armenia	16	371
9	France	16	366
10	Ukraine	16	337
11	Sweden	16	333
12	Czech Republic	16	331.5
13	Germany	16	317.5
14	Austria	16	300.5
15	Azerbaijan	15	402.5
16	Uzbekistan	15	341
17	Iran	15	337
18	Hungary	15	321
19	Egypt	15	298.5
20	Greece	15	295
21	Kazakhstan	15	289
22	Mongolia	15	279
23	Canada	15	277
24	Lithuania	15	272.5
25	Spain	14	336.5
26	Croatia	14	320.5
27	Romania	14	320
28	Georgia 1	14	320
29	Norway	14	316.5
30	Belarus	14	301
31	Moldova	14	293.5
32	Slovenia	14	291
33	Italy	14	279
34	Switzerland	14	275.5
35	Australia	14	274
36	Montenegro	14	272.5
37	Philippines	14	264.5
38	Ecuador	14	229.5
39	Israel	13	351
40	Netherlands	13	330.5
185 teams, 11 rounds			

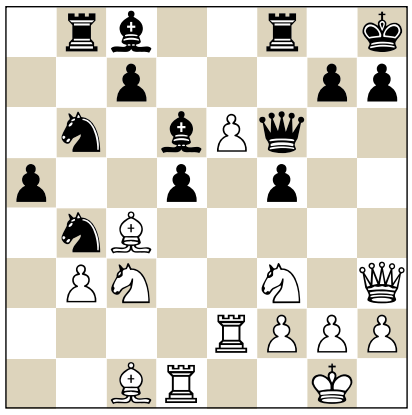
Suddenly, the lines just open for White.

23...♗d6 Played quickly. The computer suggests 23...♖f6!?, but neither of us considered this move.

24.♕h3 Actually, I didn't calculate very carefully before I made this move. I had seen Black's next move, but I had missed something.

My first thought had been 24.♗f4, but after 24...♗xf4 25.♕xf4 ♕e7 I stopped calculating because the position looked a bit bland and I didn't see many tactical chances. But White is actually better after 26.♘xd5 ♘6xd5 27.♗xd5 ♘xd5 28.♖xd5 ♖xb3 29.h4, because after 29...♖b4 White has 30.♕g5.

24...♕f6

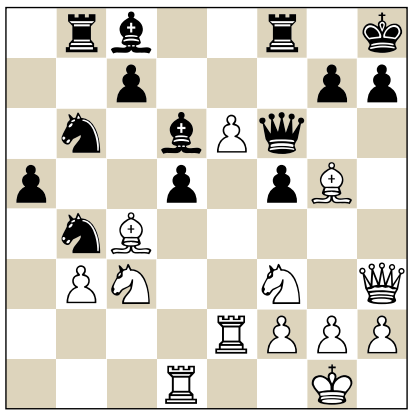


25.♘b5

Born out of necessity, as I had found a hole in my calculations. I spent 30 minutes on this difficult move and was very happy to find it. At this point I was very nervous.

What I had missed was that after 25.♘g5 h6 26.♘f7+ he just takes the knight, 26...♖xf7 (26...♔h7 27.♗g5) 27.exf7 ♕xf7, and Black is fine.

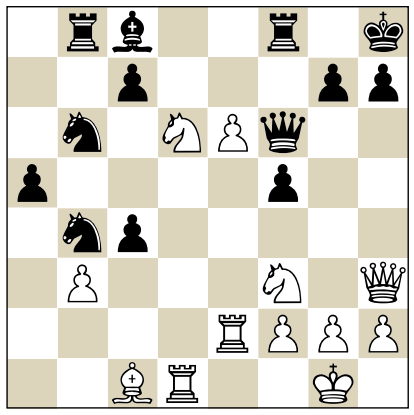
Then I next looked at 25.♗g5:



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

If he takes the knight with 25...♕xc3, I trap his queen: 26.♖c1 ♕xc1+ (26...♕xf3 27.♕xf3 dxc4 28.e7 ♖e8 29.bxc4 is equally good for White) 27.♗xc1 dxc4 28.♘g5 h6 29.♘f7+, and this looks very good for White. But then I realized that he can simply play 25...♕g6, and Black is much better.

25...dxc4 26.♘xd6 Not such a good move. Objectively best was 26.♘g5 h6 27.♘xd6 cxd6 28.e7, but here I was worried about 28...♗d7, giving back the rook: 29.exf8♕+ ♖xf8 and I have to find 30.♘e6 (which I failed to do) 30...♗xe6 31.♗b2 ♕g6 32.♖xd6 f4, and this is about equal, according to the computer.



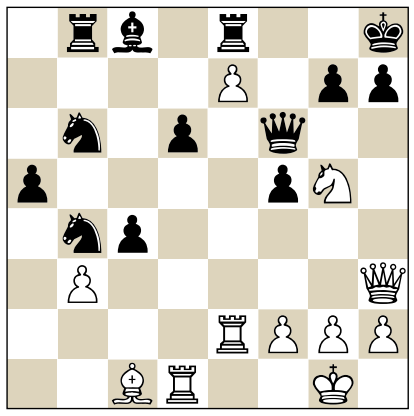
26...cxd6 This is what I had been worried about at first, but it turns out to be the critical mistake.

I also considered the better move that he missed: 26...♗xe6 27.♘g5 ♗g8 28.♖e6, and thought this was crushing, but after 28...♕a1 29.♘xf5, 29...♘6d5 30.♘h4 ♘f4 it's winning for Black.

27.e7 ♖e8

After 27...♗d7 28.exf8♕+ ♖xf8 29.bxc4 ♘xc4 White has the strong 30.♖d4 and is winning.

28.♘g5



28...♕g6

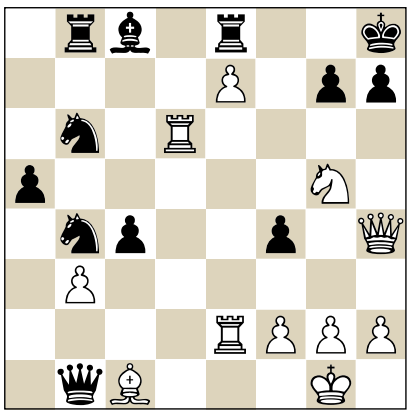
Here I had been worried about 28...h6 until I found the very important move 29.♕h5 (my first intention had been 29.♖xd6, but after 29...f4 30.♕h5 he has the amazing move 30...♗g4, which turns the tables), when after 29...♗d7 (29...♖xe7 30.♕e8 is mate) I have 30.♖xd6, and White is winning. I calculated all this

before playing 25.♘b5, and when I found this, I got very excited and became confident about the outcome.

29.♖xd6 f4 30.♕h4

After the match Wei Yi told me that White could have forced a draw with 30.♖xg6 ♗xh3 31.♘f7+ ♔g8 32.♘h6+ ♔h8, which would have been enough to win the match. But I was only following my calculations and didn't see this draw. Maybe it was a good thing in the end, since we won the gold medals due to Sonneborn-Berger.

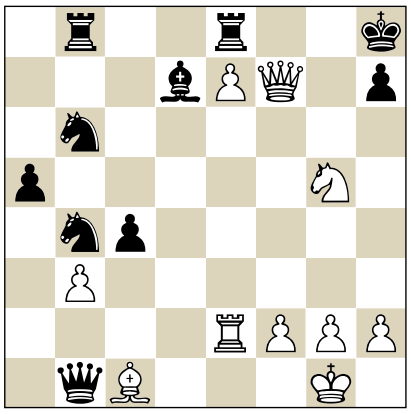
30...♕b1 After 30...♕f5 I can force a draw with 31.♖e5.



31.♖e1

A good practical move. That's what a spectator on Chessbomb called it.

My first intention was to play 31.♕xf4, but after 31...♗d7 I would have to find 32.♖f6!!, an amazing move: 32...gxf6 (32...♔g8 33.♖xb6 ♖xb6 34.♕f7+, and mate) 33.♕xf6+ ♔g8 34.♕f7+ ♔h8



35.♖c2!!. And this one you'd have to find too. Very beautiful, like a move in a study. 35...♕xc2 36.♗b2+ c3 37.♗xc3+ ♕xc3 38.♕xh7 mate.

31...♗f5

This is a mistake that makes my job easier.

He had to play 31...♗d7 to stop ♖d8. And now, after 32.♗d2 (32.♕h5), there is the computer line 32...♕f5 33.♕h5 cxb3 34.♖h6 (indeed, not so easy to foresee) 34...gxh6 35.♘f7+ ♕xf7 (35...♔g7 36.♗c3+) 36.♕xf7 ♘6d5 37.♗c1 ♘d3 38.♕xd5 ♘xc1 39.♕e5+ ♔g8 40.♖xc1 b2 41.♖b1, and White is winning.

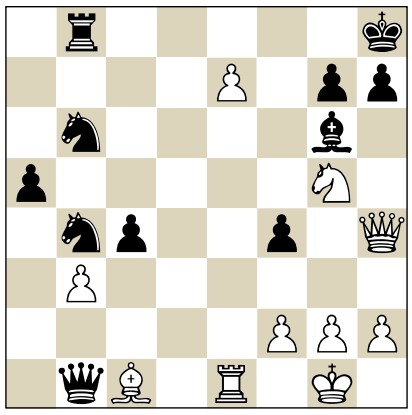
32.♖d8

There are too many threats.

32...♗g6

After 32...♘c6, 33.♕xf4 wins.

33.♖xb8 ♖xb8



34.♕xf4

Maybe he had overlooked this. Here he realized that he was losing (and also his team), and I could see his frustration. The rest is very simple.

34...♖g8 35.♘f7+ ♗xf7 36.♕xf7 ♘d7 37.e8♕ ♘f6 38.♗g5

Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

The golden couple

Huang Qian and Bu Xiangzhi are married and have a young son. They hail from different cities and live in both Chong Qing and Qing Dao. In Batumi, Huang won her second Olympiad gold, while Bu held the trophy for the first time. On WeChat, China's biggest social media platform, Bu Xiangzhi (he calls himself 'Dances with Wolves' there) wrote: 'It's a miracle that we both won, and I'm really happy. Thanks to my wife and son for always cheering me up.'

Celeb 64

John Henderson

Charles Aznavour

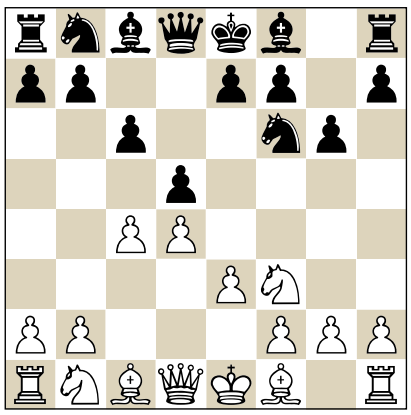
Au revoir then Charles Aznavour, the popular French *chanteur* – hailed as his country's Frank Sinatra – and son of Armenian refugees, who died recently at the age of 94 after a long and distinguished career. Not unsurprisingly, it was the Armenian connection that gave him his lifelong love for chess. Born in Paris in 1924, after his parents fled the Armenian Genocide, their apartment on rue de Navarin was frequently used as a safe house during World War II by Missak Manouchian, the Franco-Armenian poet and resistance fighter. Aznavour often related how, with nothing to do during his stay there, 'Manouchian had fun teaching me how to play chess... and chess stayed a long time in my life.' Aznavour would play whenever he could, and when he was appearing in nightclubs or on tour, he would invariably spend time between performances with a game or two with his pianist. Chess even prominently appeared on the cover of his 1960 EP album, 'Les Deux Guitars', with a portrait of Aznavour, head in hands, deep in thought over a chessboard. With the rise of Levon Aronian, Aznavour began to follow chess more closely again. This led to an invite to the Zurich Chess Challenge in 2014 to make the first move in the game Aronian-Nakamura. Aronian won, and tweeted: 'I dedicate this game to legendary Charles Aznavour, who visited me in Zurich.' ■

Both of them contributed impressively, Bu scoring 7½ out of 10 and winning the bronze medal on Board 4. Three times he was the match winner. In Round 8, he defeated Loek van Wely, securing a 2½-1½ victory against the Netherlands.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Bu Xiangzhi
Loek van Wely
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (8)
Grünfeld-Indian Defence, Schlechter Variation

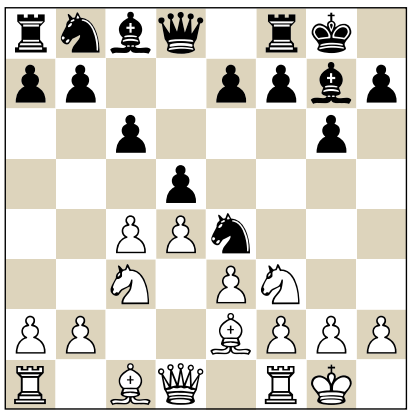
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 g6



I was largely responsible for Loek van Wely choosing this dodgy stuff, so I will not criticize him much here.

5.♘c3 ♗g7 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0 ♘e4!?

A fun idea that was suggested to me by a family member of mine. Unfortunately, (because he lost, not because the idea is bad), I passed it on to Loek.



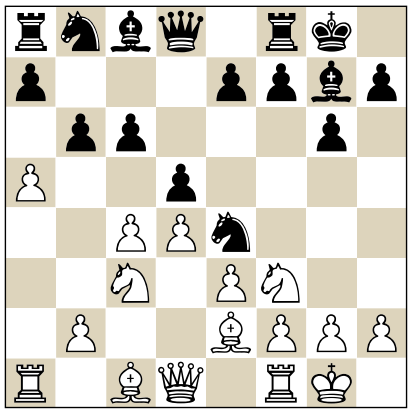
8.a4!?

An imaginative reply. It seems somewhat counterintuitive, but in fact the move a4 is incredibly useful for a ...♘xc3 bxc3 scenario.

8...b6

Afterwards we blamed this move for Black's opening misery, but it turns out that the culprit was the next one. 8...a5!? or 8...♗f5!? seem very logical too, because White still has to prove that 8.a4 was such a fantastic move.

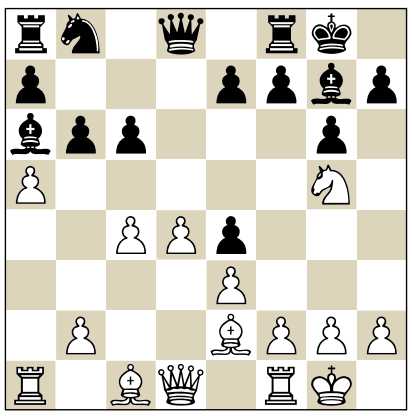
9.a5



9...♗a6?

A bit of a blunder, because when Loek saw 10.♘xe4, he instantly regretted it. 9...♘xc3! 10.bxc3 ♗a6 would be not at all bad here. White has no way to exploit the x-ray along the a-file and Black intends to slowly finish his development, either with the normal ...♘d7 or after preparing for it with some useful moves like ...e6 and ...♕c8. It is too early to say at this point, but Black will probably pretty much solve his opening problems in this way.

10.♘xe4 dxe4 11.♘g5!

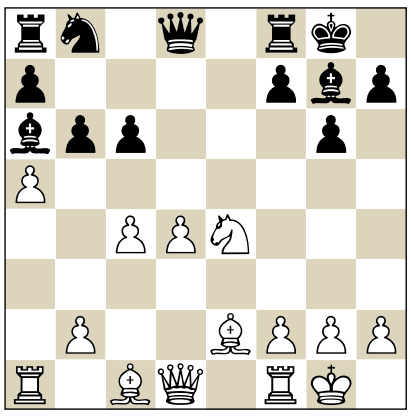


When I saw this position, my hopes weren't high. Something has clearly gone wrong for Black.

11...e5?! Protecting the pawn with ...f5 was no longer an option with the c8-bishop no longer guarding the e6-square. With the game move, Black saves his pawn, but with a knight stuck on b8 and the annoying pin on the a-file, the ensuing position is clearly not a happy one.

The lesser evil was 11...c5, but after 12.axb6 axb6 13.d5 e6 14.♘xe4 exd5 15.♕xd5 there is little or no compensation for the pawn.

12.♘xe4 exd4 13.exd4



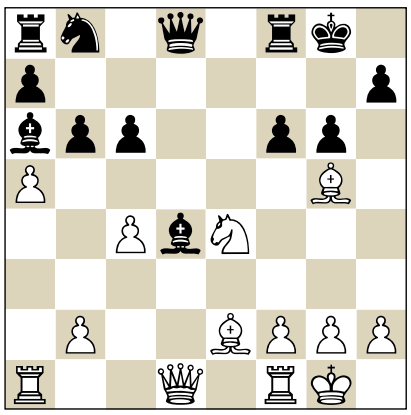
13...♗xd4

The b8-knight is such an issue that no matter how Black captures on d4, he is just totally lost. From here on in, I had no doubt about the outcome, although I have to say that Bu was not at his most ruthless starting from here.

13...♕xd4 is more natural, but after 14.♕xd4 ♗xd4 15.♖d1 Black will never finish his queenside development and is facing a totally lost endgame after 15...♗g7 16.♗f3!.

14.♗g5 A standard way to create disharmony in Black's camp.

14...f6



15.♗e3

Bu tries to cash out on his positional advantage and win some material. More ruthless was to go for an attack with 15.♗h6! ♖e8 16.♗f3 ♗e5 17.♕b3 ♔h8 18.♖fd1 ♕c7 19.c5!, and Black is toast.

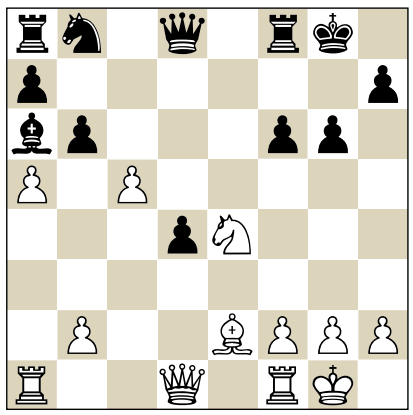
15...c5

The best attempt to stay afloat, since taking on e3 leads to a lost endgame by force: 15...♗xe3 16.♕xd8 ♗xf2+ 17.♖xf2 ♖xd8 18.♘xf6+ ♔h8 19.♗g4, and the b8-knight will not live to see the sun shine.

16.♗xd4 cxd4 17.c5?!

A serious inaccuracy, although to say that Black is left off the hook would be overstating the case.

17.b4!, stopping ...♘c6, would leave Black without a move and in a lost position.



17...♗xe2?! It was anyway better to start with 17...bxc5, as it avoids the option of 19.♕c4+.

The computer, which sees everything, finds that the best move is the prophylactic 17...♔h8!, when Black's chances to escape into a disgusting endgame with some drawing chances are more realistic than before.

18.♕xe2 bxc5 19.♕c4+!

A clever intermezzo that Black could have avoided by not taking on e2 first.

19...♖f7

19...♔h8 20.♘xc5 is also bad news, as ♘e6 is coming.

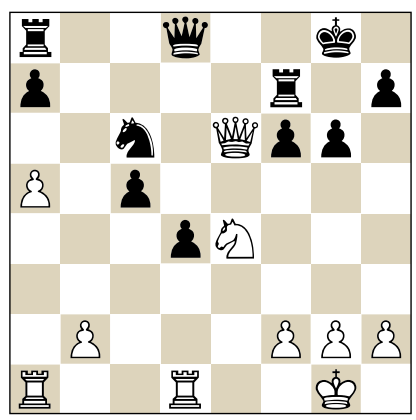
20.♖fd1

Also strong would be 20.♖fe1, or the energetic 20.b4!.

20...♘c6 21.♕e6!

The point. Not only is the c6-knight under attack now, but White is also threatening 22.♘d6.

A unique moment: Golden couple Huang Qian and Bu Xiangzhi with the Nona Gaprindashvili Cup (the trophy for the winning women's team) and the Hamilton Russell Cup.



21...♘e5?

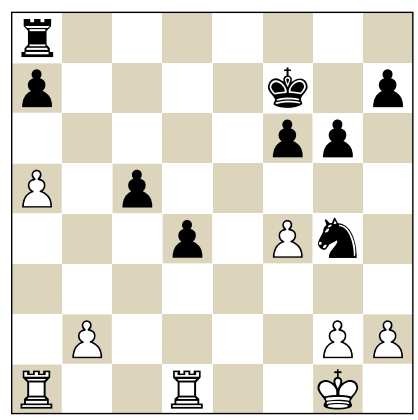
This gives up an exchange as well, but the main problem is that the c5-pawn will fall.

21...♕c8! was the only way to continue the battle, when White should resist the temptation to win the exchange: 22.♕d5! ♘e7 23.♕c4! ♕c6 24.♘xc5 ♘f5, and White has a dominant position with the potential for an outside passer, but Black will continue to fight.

22.f4! ♘g4

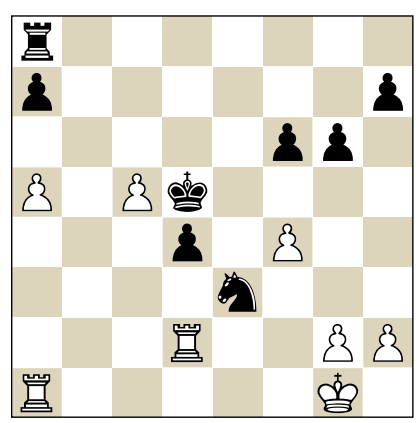
Resourceful, but White ignores the pseudo-gift and focuses on winning the exchange.

23.♘d6! ♕d7 24.♕xf7+ ♕xf7 25.♘xf7 ♔xf7



26.b4 26.♖ac1 wins rather trivially, it seems: 26...♖b8 27.♖xc5 ♖xb2 28.h3 ♘e3 29.♖xd4, and Black won't be in time to set up some kind of drawing mechanism with rook and knight.

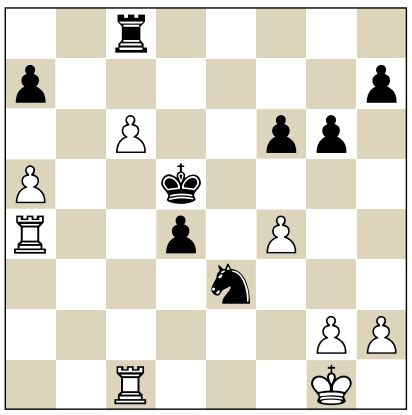
26...♘e3 27.♖d2 ♔e6 28.bxc5 ♔d5



The high-spirited Chinese women's team is ready for another round. Seated at the board (l. to r.): Zhai Mo, Lei Tingjie, Huang Qian and Ju Wenjun.

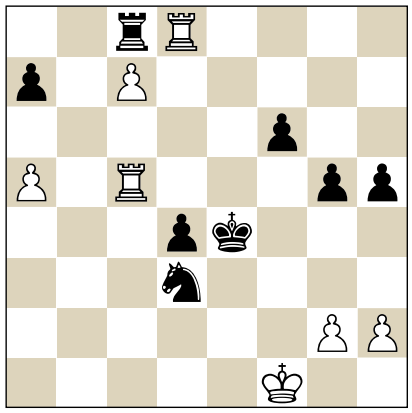
At this point, both Erwin l'Ami and I, who were still playing alongside Loek, started harbouring some false hopes, because Black's harmony in the centre looks so seductive. But as Bu shows with a couple of precise moves, this was just an illusion.

29.♖a4! ♘c4 30.♖c2 ♘e3 31.♖c1! ♖c8 32.c6!



And the c-pawn decides. Black is unable to convert his passed d-pawn, and if he decides to exchange it for White's c-passer, he may as well resign. The rest is easy and was executed flawlessly by Bu.

32...♖c7 33.♔f2 h5 34.♖b4 g5 35.♖b7 ♖c8 36.♖d7+ ♔e4 37.c7 ♘d5 38.♖c5 ♘xf4 39.♖d8 ♘d3+ 40.♔f1

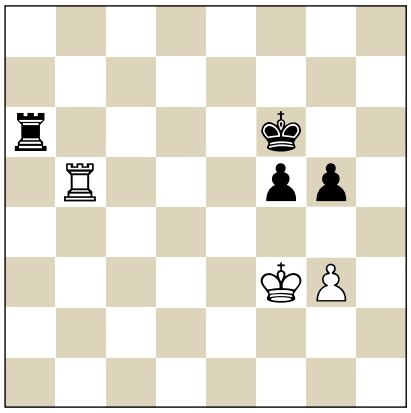


Black resigned. A delayed opening fiasco and a crucial win for team China.

■ ■ ■

Huang Qian played all games on Board 4 of the women's team, with an outstanding 7½ out of 11 score (with 9 blacks!) and without losing a single game. 'I felt honoured standing next to Kramnik on the stage receiving an individual silver medal', she said. According to coach Yu Shaoteng, her win in Round 6 over Anna Ushenina was one of the most remarkable moments for the team (the notes to this and the next fragments are by Yu Shaoteng).

Anna Ushenina
Huang Qian
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (6)



position after 105...♔f6

Theoretically speaking, this position was a draw. But Huang Qian did not give up and kept looking for winning chances, because we had to win this match to draw level with Ukraine in the standings. But Ushenina defended well and we were in trouble.

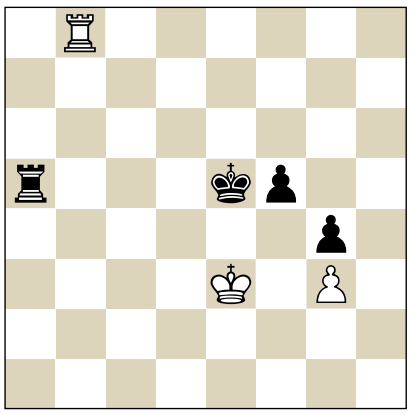
106.♔f2 g4

Black finally pushed the pawn, before reaching the deadline of the 50-move drawing rule!

107.♔f1 ♔e6 108.♔f2 ♖d6 109.♔e3

This is dangerous. It was safer to play 109.♔f1 and keep the king on the first and second rank.

109...♖d5 110.♖b8 ♖d1 111.♖b6+ ♔e5 112.♖b5+ ♔f6 113.♖b6+ ♔e5 114.♖b5+ ♖d5 115.♖b8 ♖a5



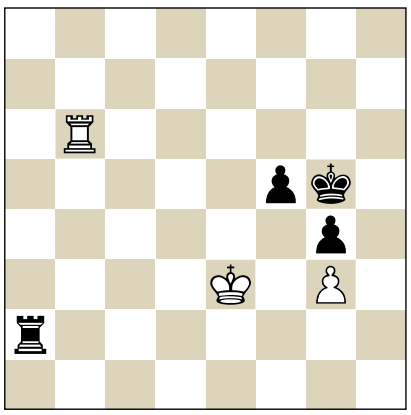
116.♖b3?

Why not 116.♔f2 ♖a2+ 117.♔f1 ?

116...♖a2

Now Black sees a chance!

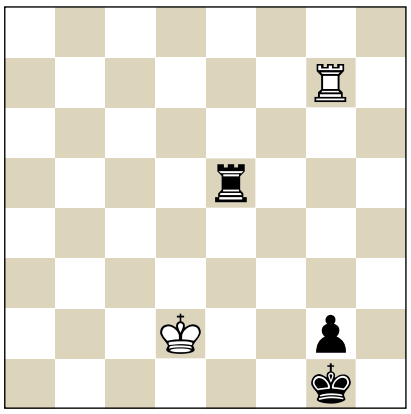
117.♖b5+ ♔f6 118.♖b6+ ♔g5



119.♖b8?? A fatal mistake. Ushenina probably thought it would be a draw anyway. The only defence was 119.♖b3 ♖g2 120.♔d4 ♖f2 121.♖c3 ♖f3 122.♖xf3 gxf3 123.♔e3 ♔g4 124.♔f2 with a draw.

119...♖g2 Now Black is winning.

120.♖g8+ ♔f6 121.♖f8+ ♔g6 122.♔f4 ♖f2+ 123.♔e5 ♖e2+ 124.♔d4 ♖g2 125.♔e5 ♖xg3 126.♖xf5 ♖f3 127.♖f4 ♔g5 128.♖a4 g3 129.♖a8 ♖e3+ 130.♔d4 ♖e1 131.♔d3 ♔g4 132.♔d2 ♖e7 133.♖g8+ ♔h3 134.♖h8+ ♔g2 135.♖g8 ♖e5 136.♖g7 ♔h2 137.♖h7+ ♔g1 138.♖g7 g2



139.♖g8 ♖h5 140.♔e2 ♔h2 141.♔f2 ♖f5+ 142.♔e2 g1♕ 143.♖h8+ ♔g2 144.♖g8+ ♔h1

White resigned.

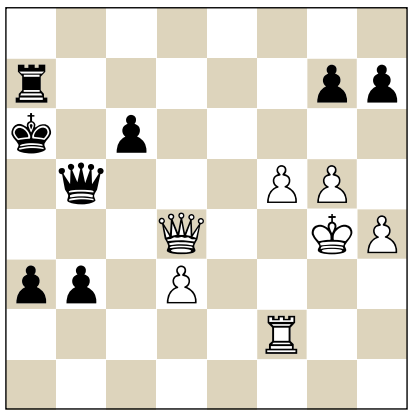
Huang Qian's efforts paid off and the match against Ukraine was won. This was a very important turning point that helped the team stay in the race for the title.

The World Champion

The last round of the 43rd Olympiad ended dramatically. The Chinese men's team tied the match against reigning Olympiad champions USA led by Fabiano Caruana (2-2, four draws) and then a nervous wait for the final outcome began. As the last games of the Olympiad concluded, the Sonneborn-Berger tiebreaker switched from 324.5-320.5 in favour of the USA before the start of the last round, to 372.5-360.5 in favour of China. This time it was China that benefited from the tiebreaker system and became the lucky winner!

There was even more drama in the women's section. Ukraine had won their match against the USA with a score of 3-1. With 18 match points, Ukraine would win gold without needing any tiebreaks if Russia managed to beat China. Aleksandra Goryachkina produced her best game of the tournament and beat Shen Yang, while the game between Valentina Gunina and Huang Qian ended in a draw. Russia was leading 1½-½. On Board 4, Lei Tingjie was completely lost against Olga Girya, while the game on Board 1 was heading for a draw. But Lei kept her cool and fought on until she broke her opponent's nerves. Girya couldn't avoid perpetual check and had to accept a draw.

Lei Tingjie
Olga Girya
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (11)



position after 52...♔a6

Lei Tingjie had been down two pawns in a completely lost position for a while, but she fought on and managed to generate some counter-play against the black king.

Batumi (women) 2018

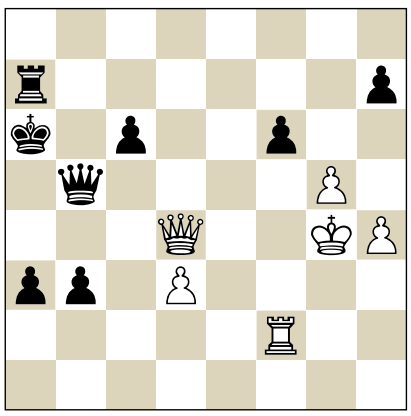
		Pts	Tiebreak
1	China	18	407
2	Ukraine	18	395.5
3	Georgia 1	17	375
4	Russia	16	379.5
5	Hungary	16	372
6	Armenia	16	366
7	USA	16	359.5
8	India	16	352.5
9	Georgia 2	16	351.5
10	Azerbaijan	16	347.5
11	Kazakhstan	16	346.5
12	France	16	315.5
13	Spain	15	343.5
14	Iran	15	340
15	Vietnam	15	338.5
16	Poland	15	324.5
17	Uzbekistan	15	316.5
18	Belarus	15	308
19	Slovakia	15	283
20	Mongolia	14	332
21	Czech Republic	14	326.5
22	Serbia	14	307.5
23	Romania	14	304.5
24	Turkey	14	299
25	Peru	14	292
26	Netherlands	14	291
27	Cuba	14	288.5
28	Germany	14	286
29	England	14	279
30	Colombia	14	267
31	Slovenia	14	255
32	Switzerland	13	311
33	Lithuania	13	299
34	Israel	13	290.5
35	Indonesia	13	289
36	Latvia	13	283
37	Greece	13	279.5
38	Canada	13	272
39	Croatia	13	272
40	Austria	13	265
151 teams, 11 rounds			

53.f6 gxf6??

Girya had been playing very well, but makes a big mistake at the crucial moment.

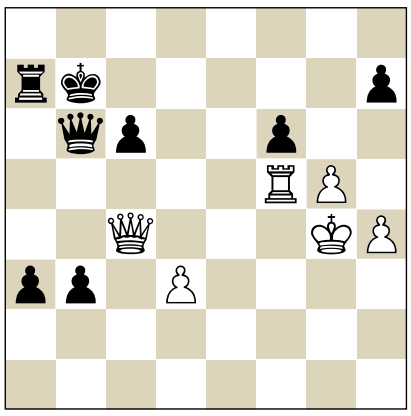
She should have played carefully here: 53...c5, and Black still has chances to win: 54.fxg7 (54.♕d6+ ♕b6) 54...cxd4 55.g8♕ a2 56.♕c8+ ♔a5 57.♖f5 a1♕ 58.♖xb5+ ♔xb5, and with no perpetual checks, White loses.

The prolonged and nerve-wracking battle between Alexandra Kosteniuk and Ju Wenjun decided the fight for first place.



54.♖f5! Lei Tingjie grabs her last chance! Black may have been hoping for 54.gxf6? h5+ 55.♔h3 ♖f7, and Black wins.

54...♕b6 55.♕c4+ ♔b7



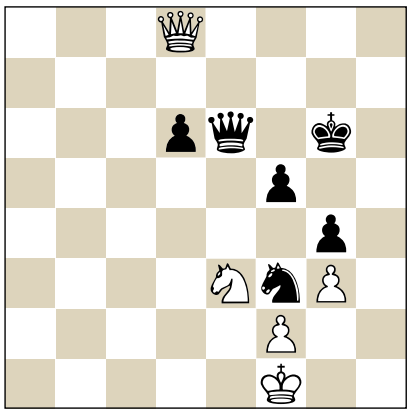
56.♖xf6

It's also a draw after 56.♕f7+ ♔a8 (56...♕c7 57.♕xb3+) 57.♕e8+ ♔b7 58.♕f7+ ♔c8 59.♕e8+ ♔b7 60.♕f7+.

56...a2 57.♖f7+ ♔a8 58.♖f8+ ♔b7 59.♖f7+ ♔a8 60.♖f8+ ♔b7 61.♖f7+ Draw!

Russia was still leading 2-1, but the mood had changed. Ju Wenjun fully realized the importance of her game. She had to win to level the score in the match and for the team to draw level with Ukraine, when the Sonneborn-Berger tiebreak would decide. She kept playing strong moves and putting pressure on her opponent. 'Grinding down her opponent', as the Chinese say. Kosteniuk seemed exhausted and at some point she lost a pawn. And Ju Wenjun showed her amazing tenacity and fighting spirit.

Alexandra Kosteniuk
Ju Wenjun
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (11)



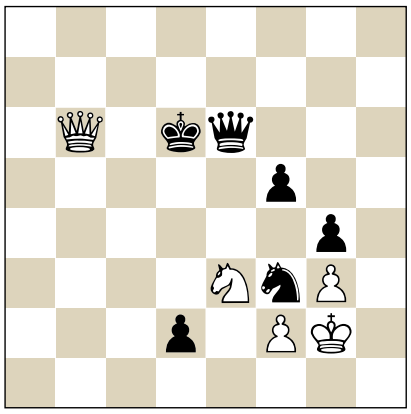
position after 71...♘f3

The position looks drawish, although Black is a pawn up. There are a lot of checks and it is hard for Black to escape from them. White just needs to defend carefully. But there was little time left on the clocks.

72.♕b8?

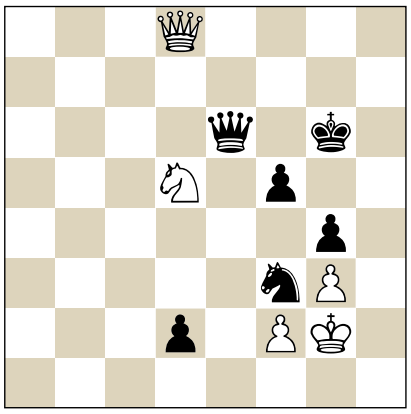
A mistake, giving Black the opportunity to advance the d-pawn. White's queen was perfectly placed on d8. White could just stay put by moving her king from f1 to g2 and back, when Black can hardly make progress.

72...d5! 73.♔g2 d4 74.♘c2 d3 75.♘e3 d2 76.♕d8 ♔f7 77.♕c7+ ♔f6 78.♕d8+ ♔f7 79.♕c7+ ♔e8 80.♕b8+ ♔d7 81.♕b7+ ♔d6 82.♕b6+

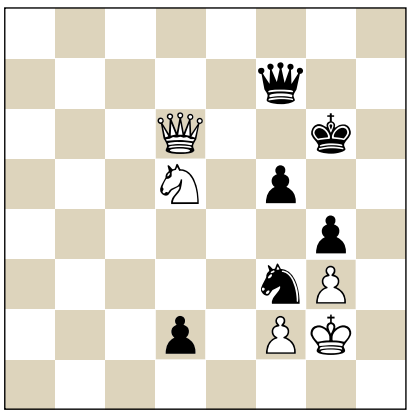


'Kosteniuk seemed exhausted and at some point she lost a pawn. And Ju Wenjun showed her amazing tenacity and fighting spirit.'

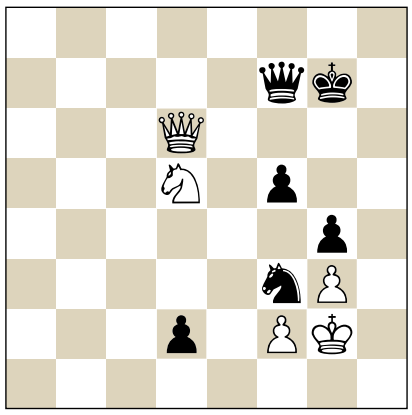
82...♔e7 At this point, Kosteniuk claimed a threefold repetition. It took the arbiters nearly half an hour to find out the claim was wrong, and understandably Kosteniuk was unhappy about this. She seemed affected and could not focus on the game.
After 82...♔e5 83.♕b2+ ♔e4 84.♕b1+ ♔e5 85.♕b2+ White draws.
83.♕c7+ ♔f6 84.♕d8+ ♔g6 85.♘d5?
A risky attacking attempt, as the knight leaves the defence.
85.♔f1 would have been a draw.



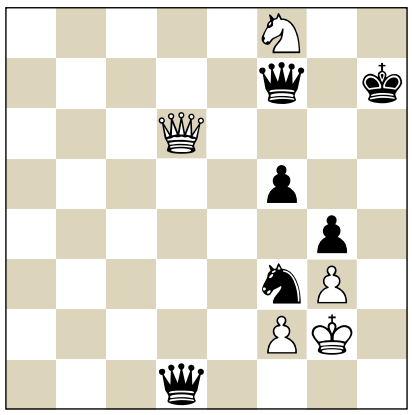
85...♕f7? Missing a good chance. There were two ways to win:
85...♘e1+ 86.♔f1 ♘d3∓ 87.♘e3 ♕xe3 88.♕g8+ ♔f6 89.♕f8+ ♔e6 90.♕e8+ ♔d6 91.♕d8+ ♔c6 92.♕c8+ ♔b6 93.♕b8+ ♔c5 94.♕c7+ ♔b4 95.♕b7+ ♔c3 96.♕c6+ ♕c5 and wins, or 85...♔h7 86.♘e3 ♕c6 87.♕e7+ ♔g6 88.♕d8 ♔f7 and wins.
86.♕d6+?
Returning the favour. Why not just go back to defend?: 86.♘e3.



86...♔g7?
Missing another chance:
86...♔h7 87.♘e3 ♕b7 88.♕d8 (or 88.♘d1 ♘d4+ 89.♔h2 ♕e4 90.♘e3 d1♕ 91.♘xd1 ♘f3+ 92.♔g2 ♕e1 93.♕d7+ ♔g6 94.♕d6+ ♔h5 and there are no more checks) 88...♕c6 89.♕e7+ ♔g6 90.♕d8 ♔f7 (with zugzwang for White!) 91.♘xf5 ♘h4+ 92.♔f1 ♕c4+ 93.♔g1 ♕c1+ 94.♔h2 ♘f3+ 95.♔g2 ♕g1 mate.



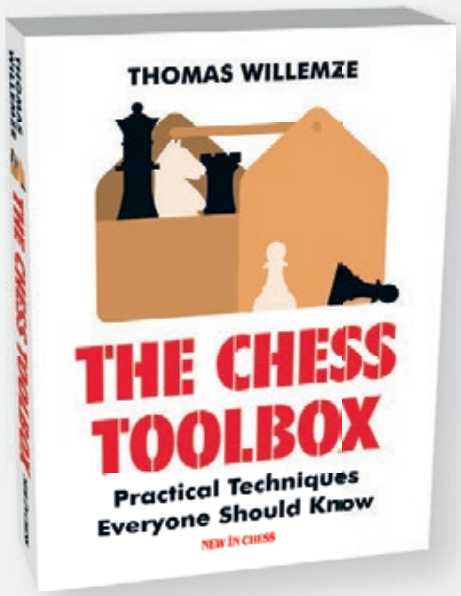
87.♘f4?? In time-pressure both players made several mistakes, but Kosteniuk makes the last one.
87.♘e3 would have saved the game and gained Russia the bronze medals.
87...♔h7!
Zugzwang again for White!
88.♘e6
88.♕d8 ♕b7 89.♘d5 d1♕ 90.♘f6+ ♔g6 91.♕xd1 ♔xf6 and the extra piece should be enough for Black.
88...d1♕ 89.♘f8+



89...♔g8! And not 89...♕xf8 90.♕h6+ with stalemate!
90.♕xd1 ♔xf8 91.♕a1 ♔g8 92.♕a8+ ♔h7 93.♕a5 ♘g5 94.♕b5 ♔g6 95.♕c6+ ♕e6
And Kosteniuk resigned!

After many twists and turns, China's women's team had finally surmounted all obstacles and won the Olympiad. ■

A no-nonsense guide



"The various parts of the book are all about piece coordination (..) It's obviously written by a teacher who really wants his students to fully understand the subject matter (..) This book is highly valuable for both self-improvers and trainers. I, for one, am certainly going to use it in my trainings."
Bram Klapwijk, Schaaksite

"The writing is clear and uncluttered, with a consistent focus on the practical player's needs. I can't think of another book that would be more helpful to the average player who is intent upon improving his chess."
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"Willemze presents a number of key improvement techniques in a user-friendly format."
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Best of Batumi

Olympiad new milestone in rich chess history of Georgia

DAVID LLADA

Like no other chess gathering, Olympiads give you the feeling that FIDE's slogan is an apt one. *Gens una sumus*. Yes, high-blown as it may sound, that's how it can feel. We are one family. With teams from 180 different countries, the 43rd Olympiad in Batumi was no different. Old and new friends from all corners of the world met and the competition was fierce. Memorable games were played and a new FIDE president elected, Arkady Dvorkovich, who created hope and expectation as he mapped out his plans. **DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM** reports from the shores of the Black Sea.

With pleasant summer temperatures and the lure of a traditional seaside resort, Batumi welcomed the Olympiad back to the Caucasus. Two years after chess players from all over the world had strolled along the Caspian Sea in Baku, they now could go for relaxing walks on the sunny shores of the Black Sea. With a wide variety of natural and cultural attractions, a great local cuisine and legendary wines, Georgia is attracting more and more foreign guests. Batumi used to be a popular summer destination in Soviet times, but today little reminds the visitor of those days. If you search carefully you will find remnants of Soviet architecture, but they are hard to find among the high-rise luxury hotels that increasingly dominate the skyline these days. The majority of tourists are still Russians, and Israelis tempted by the many

The spectacular Opening Ceremony of the 43rd Chess Olympiad was held at Georgia's largest concert hall, the Black Sea Arena, that seats close to 10,000 people.

casinos, but it will only be a matter of time before many others will come.

Typically, Zurab Azmaiparashvili, the Head of the Organizing Committee, stressed that the promotion of chess was just one aspect of having the Olympiad in his country, and that his first and foremost wish was that the chess players would discover what a great country Georgia is to visit.

Obviously he couldn't, and didn't, ignore the rich chess tradition of his country, in particular the historic achievements of the best Georgian women players, most notably former World Champions Nona Gaprindashvili and Maya Chiburdanidze. They were present at the venue every day, giving countless interviews and making first moves in various matches. 'Azmai' could also have pointed at himself and Giorgi Giorgadze, the President of the Georgian Chess Federation, who as promising young GMs started their careers working for Garry Kasparov during his matches against Anatoly Karpov. On the final day, Azmaiparashvili, who was re-elected President of the European Chess Union in Batumi, was presented with a two-volume work on his dual career as a chess player and politician.

This time, the Georgian team was led by Baadur Jobava, the hero of the Baku Olympiad. Unfortunately, the imaginative Jobava failed to shine, and in the end the Georgian men had to settle for a disappointing 28th place. Again the Georgian success came from the women. Led by Nana Dzagnidze, with a 2600 performance, the Georgian women finished third.

Uniform clothes

Thanks to the building boom, there was no lack of hotel rooms in Batumi, and most of the participants were staying in centrally located luxury hotels. Unfortunately, due to a last-minute cancellation, several teams had to be relocated to other hotels. These could only be found at some 40 to 50 kilometres away, which meant that it took them more than two hours to get to the venue and back every day.

Other small discomforts were also connected with the enormous size of the Olympiad. The anti-cheating measures included a thorough search of everyone entering the venue, where pens, phones, watches and any kind of computers were banned. Inevitably, this caused long queues, and on the first day it almost caused the American team to lose their match by forfeit. Team USA arrived well in time, but had to wait so long to be searched that they only reached

their tables six minutes before they were going to be forfeited. In the course of the Olympiad, the situation improved, mainly because of the teams arriving even earlier, but also thanks to the great numbers of friendly and helpful volunteers.

As the defending champions the Americans, led by Challenger Fabiano Caruana, were generally regarded as the top favourites for the gold medals, and it was clear for everyone to see that they were again setting their sights on first place. The Americans were also among a growing number of teams that had special uniform suits designed for the Olympiad. The same went for Russia, China, Azerbaijan, India (for the first time since Turin 2006 led by Vishy Anand again) and many others. The Chinese even had a variety of specially designed clothes with them, ranging from casual shirts to suits. Apparently, they wanted to avoid the situation they had found themselves in in Tromsø four years ago, when at the end of the Olympiad their 'lucky shirts' had begun to smell of success too much.

In fact, there are plans within FIDE to make uniforms or uniform ways of clothing compulsory, not only because there is a feeling that this would look better and help raise the prestige of the sport, but also as part of the fight against cheating. When players and captains are identically dressed it is much easier for the arbiters to see which conversations – for instance in the smoking sections outside the playing hall – are definitely undesirable.

'The slogan of Makropoulos' campaign was "dignity above money", which as the election approached, seemed to primarily say that what he lacked was money.'

FIDE presidential elections

The Olympiad took place in two inter-connected halls, one for the top matches in both the Open and Women's competition and one for the remaining matches. Besides these halls, there was the EXPO, a vast space next to the press room with stalls selling chess books, clocks and what not, where a lot of the conversations were not about the favourites in the Olympiad, but about the FIDE presidential elections. Here were the booths of the two main candidates, Georgios Makropoulos of Greece, as the representative of the current FIDE leadership, and his challenger, Arkady Dvorkovich of Russia. The third candidate, English grandmaster Nigel Short, had no booth, probably because of lack of funds, but perhaps also as a further indication that he didn't believe he could win and mainly hoped to support Dvorkovich's candidacy and prevent the election of Makropoulos, whom he had attacked openly many times (Nigel Short describes his strategy in his column in this issue).

For most of the delegates, team captains and other passers-by it was not hard to choose between the two booths. In 'Makro's' booth the main attraction was a caricaturist who was not very good and the occasional small cup of wine, in Dvorkovich's booth, visitors could play chess, while there was a seemingly endless supply of wine, and also a seemingly endless supply of goody bags (#newpeople #newhorizons #newideas) filled with chess sets and clocks.

The slogan of Makropoulos' Fide-forward campaign was 'dignity above money', which, as the day of the election approached, seemed to primarily say that what he lacked to accomplish his plans was money. The 'money' was also a reference to the funds that Dvorkovich, former

ETERI KUBLASHVILI

Arkady Dvorkovich knew it would not be easy when he took on former World Champions Maya Chiburdanidze and Nona Gaprindashvili in an offhand game in his election booth.

Deputy Prime Minister of Russia, had undoubtedly been given in his country to strengthen his chances, and the support from Russian embassies worldwide that promoted his candidacy. Makropoulos' criticism of both must have sounded insincere to many delegates, as there was widespread belief that he had not been a stranger to these strategies himself when his former ally Kirsan Ilyumzhinov was still President.

In a last-ditch attempt, Makropoulos lodged a complaint against Dvorkovich with the Ethics Commission, hoping to exclude the Russian because of illegal interference in the elections, but when this did not have the desired effect either, the Greek must have sensed that he was in trouble. While he could only pin his hopes on old friends and possible anti-Russian sentiments, the number of pro-Dvorkovich delegates only rose. At a lavish party in Jasmine, a restaurant-bar next to the Sheraton Hotel where the FIDE Congress took place, Arkady Dvorkovich said that he would raise the FIDE annual budget from 2 to 5 million euro for the next four years. The reactions from his listeners were a prelude to the outcome of the elections the next day. After Short had indeed withdrawn his candidacy and expressed his full support of Dvorkovich, the race was run. With 103 against 78 votes Arkady Dvorkovich was elected FIDE President.

Georgios Makropoulos and Arkady Dvorkovich share a laugh at the General Assembly. The Russian had the last laugh as he won the elections with 103 against 78 votes.

Close finish

The election of Arkady Dvorkovich also drew enthusiastic and optimistic reactions from the majority of top players as they entered the final phase of the Olympiad. Once again it was a very close race till the very end, which was decided by the Sonneborn-Berger tiebreak system (almost always unsatisfactory in such cases). A race that looked even closer in the final standings, where the top three finishers had exactly the same match results (8 wins, 2 draws and 1 loss). But it was only really close between China and the USA, who had been playing at the top boards all through the Olympiad, while Russia worked hard to fight their way back to the top after losing to the remarkable Polish team in Round 4. Poland may safely be called the revelation of the Batumi Olympiad, and many felt that they had deserved the bronze medals.

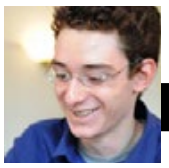
But China won, the USA didn't complain that this time the tiebreak brought them second place, and Russia must have been relieved to claim third place. Before the Olympiad they had had a training session in Sochi and met with Russian president Vladimir Putin before flying to Batumi in the private plane of the President of the Russian Chess Federation, Andrey Filatov. On the way back there were even two private planes flying back to Russia, because Arkady Dvorkovich also had one at his disposal. With a third place in the Open section and a fourth place in the Women's, the feelings on board of these planes must have been mixed.

'At a lavish party Arkady Dvorkovich announced that he would raise the FIDE annual budget from 2 to 5 million euro for the next four years.'

Bringing out the best

Choosing from hundreds of games is a thankless task, but picking the absolute highlights turned out to be not that complicated. We will conclude these impressions from Batumi with a selection of games you should not miss. And as often happens, being so special, they also brought out the best in the annotators.

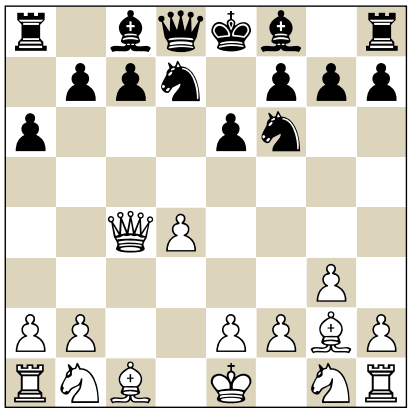
You have already seen Ding Liren's evergreen against Duda and a fine effort by Bu Xiangzhi, another pillar of the Chinese team, in the previous Olympiad article. Ding Liren scored the best result on Board 1, ahead of the leader of the American team, Fabiano Caruana, whose excellent play in Batumi must have further boosted his confidence for his match against Magnus Carlsen. One of his victims at the Olympiad was the man who Carlsen defeated to become World Champion.



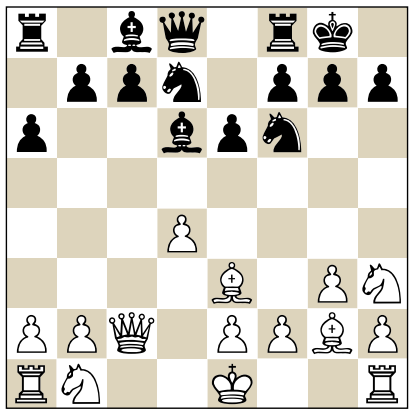
NOTES BY
Fabiano Caruana

Fabiano Caruana
Vishy Anand
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (4)
Catalan Opening, Open Variation

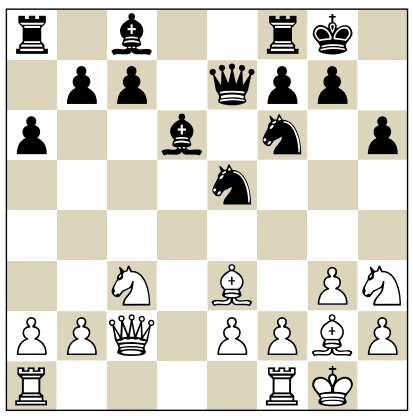
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 dxc4 5.♕a4+
This move order against 4...dxc4 in the Catalan was played by Anish Giri against Vishy Anand in Wijk aan Zee and I analysed it earlier in the year.
5...♘bd7 6.♕xc4 a6



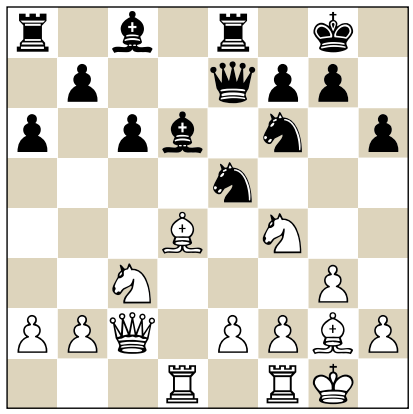
7.♗e3
A new idea. I had noticed that there was this bishop move instead of what Anish did, 7.♕c2, after which Vishy showed good prep and made an easy draw after 7...c5 8.♘f3 b5 9.♘e5 ♘d5 10.♘xd7 ♗xd7 11.♗xd5 exd5 12.dxc5 ♗c6 13.0-0 d4 14.♗f4 ♕d5 15.f3 d3 16.exd3 ♕xc5+ 17.♕xc5 ♗xc5+ 18.♔g2 ♗d4 19.♘c3 ♔d7 20.♖ae1, ½-½.
The text-move stops ...c5 and at least leads to a very different kind of play.
7...♗d6
Not going for ...b5 and ... c5 but for ...e5, which is another way to play.
Black can go 7...b5 8.♕c2 ♖b8, but he will be struggling to play ...c5. It's probably equal, but still quite complicated.
8.♕c2
First I get my queen out of the way.
8...0-0 9.♘h3
Here the knight is better than on f3, as from h3 it often swings to f4. But that said, 9.♘f3 is also a possibility, of course.



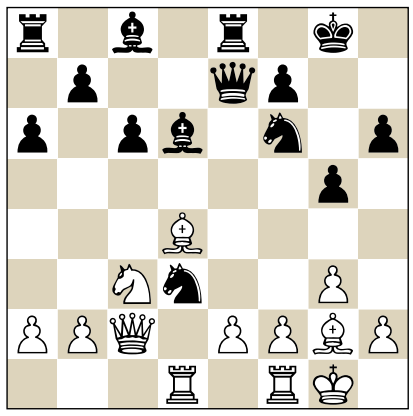
9...e5 This is what his play is based on, so he goes for it.
10.0-0 h6 The point is that Black wants to go ...♘g4, but if he does so immediately, 11.♗g5 attacks the queen and Black loses time.
11.dxe5
He forces me to take the pawn and let him develop his knight, since after 11.♘c3 he would go 11...♘g4.
11...♘xe5 12.♘c3 ♕e7
This is part of his set-up, together with ...c6. Because of my next move his queen has to clear the d-file.



13.♖ad1 ♖e8
After the immediate 13...c6 I would have gone 14.♘f4 anyway (although there are also ideas with 14.♘a4), when he would most likely play 14...♖e8 and transpose to the game. 14...♖d8 is also possible, but might run into 15.♗b6, so e8 is the best square for the rook.
14.♘f4 c6 This is necessary, because you have to be able to move the c8-bishop and stop the option ♘d5 for White in some cases.
15.♗d4
15.♘a4 runs into 15...g5 16.♘d3 ♗f5, and Black is very harmoniously placed.



15...g5 I thought he might go 15...♖b8 to stop any ♘a4 plans, when I can make some semi-useful move like 16.a3 or 16.♖fe1.
That was a direction he could have chosen, but he chose the most direct one.
16.♘d3 ♘xd3 Now, after 16...♗f5, I have 17.e4, and at least he is not pinning me, and after 17...♗g6 we have a complicated position. White may be slightly better, but I think he should have gone for this.

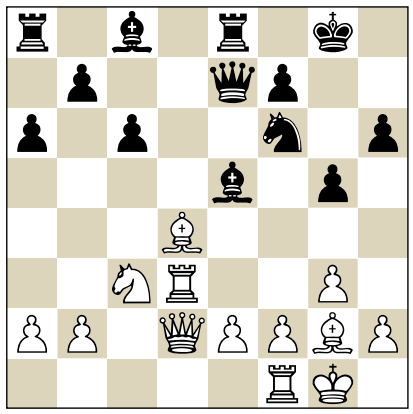


17.♖xd3
He had missed this move. If I take with the queen, 17.♕xd3, he goes 17...♗e5 and this looks OK for him.
17...♗e5 The only reasonable move, since I am threatening 18...♗xf6, which he has to stop.
The point is that 17...♗f5 loses to 18.♗xf6, when after 18...♗xd3 19.♗xe7 ♗xc2 20.♗xd6, I pick up two pieces and win. In case of 18...♕xf6 I have the important move 19.♖xd6, and after 19...♕xd6 20.♕xf5 I have two pieces for the rook, with a winning position.
18.♕d2
Preserving the tension and trying to win the d-file, which is basically all

I want in this position. I will go ♖fd1, and the d-file combined with his weakened kingside will give me some advantage.

I spent a lot of time trying to make 18.♖e3 work, but the problem is 18...♘g4 19.♖e4 ♗f5 20.♖xe5 ♗xc2 21.♖xe7 ♖xe7.

I was also looking at 18.♗xe5, but after 18...♕xe5 19.♖e3 ♕c5 20.♖xe8+ ♘xe8 his knight is slightly displaced, but the queen is actually excellent on c5.



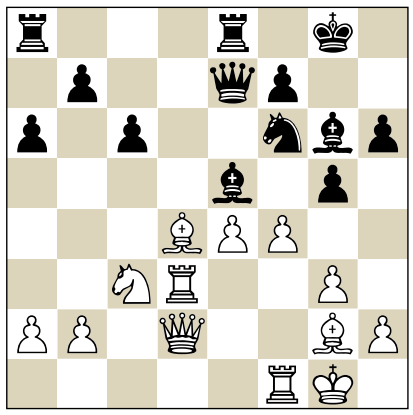
18...♗f5 The best move. He has to develop his bishop somehow.

If he goes 18...♗xd4 19.♖xd4 ♗e6, I have 20.♖d1, and he doesn't get the d-file and has a really lousy position.

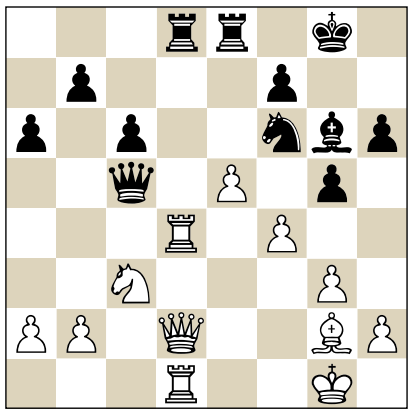
19.e4 ♗g6 20.f4

Very ambitious, but maybe not the best.

I could have played 20.♗xe5 ♕xe5 21.f3, and here I have the d-file and some advantage. But the position is not unmanageable for Black.



20...gxf4 This is a clear mistake. He should have played 20...♗xd4+ 21.♖xd4 ♖ad8, and the play can become very sharp, because I have 22.e5 ♕c5 23.♖d1, and now:



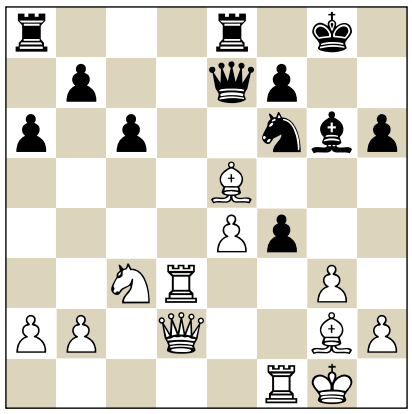
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

A) 23...♗h5, after which it looks like he is overloading my rook; but I can step out of the pin: 24.♔h1 and after 24...♗xd1 (if he takes everything on d4 – 24...♖xd4 25.♕xd4 ♕xd4 26.♖xd4 – I have a really better endgame) I have 25.♖xd8.

B) Another idea is 23...♘h5, trying to play the knight to g7, or put pressure on f4 in hopes of bailing out in a tenable endgame.

21.♗xe5

This wins. Maybe he was hoping that I would recapture with 21.gxf4, when after 21...♗xd4+ 22.♖xd4 ♖ad8 we'd get another version of the above.



21...♕xe5 22.gxf4 ♕c5+

He has to give this check because of my threat 23.f5.

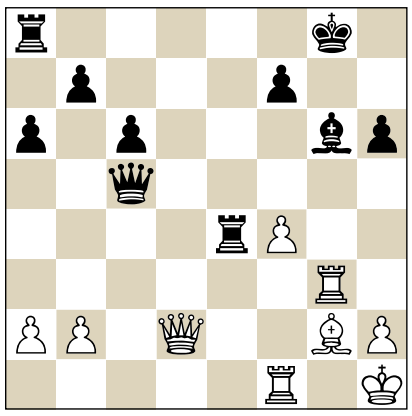
23.♔h1 ♘xe4 After 23...♔h7, 24.e5 would be very strong: 24...♗xd3 25.♕xd3+, and I pick up the knight.

24.♘xe4 ♖xe4 The tactical point after 24...♗xe4 is that 25.♗xe4 ♖xe4 26.♕g2+ picks up his rook.

25.♖g3 I had already seen this move when I took on e5. I threaten to take his rook and if he moves his rook to somewhere other than to d4, I have f5. I was also trying to make 25.f5 work, but after 25...♗xf5 26.♕xh6, he has 26...♗g6.

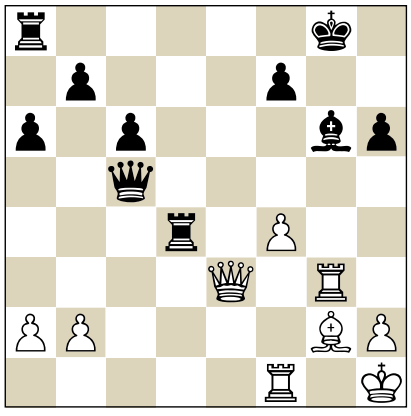
NEW IN CHESS

Challenger Fabiano Caruana warmed up with a silver medal on Board 1.



25...♖d4 He also had 25...♔h7, which is moderately tricky: 26.♖xg6 ♖d4, and it looks as if he is escaping, but I have 27.♕c3 ♕xc3 (27...♖c4 28.♕g7 mate) 28.bxc3 fxg6 29.cxd4, and I end up a piece up.

26.♕e3



This also wins, so Black resigned.
The only way to do something against the renewed threat of 27.f5 is 26...♔h7, when I play 27.f5 anyway. And now 27...♗h5 28.♖h3 picks up the bishop, while after 27...♗xf5 28.♖xf5, I can meet 28...♖d1+ (after 28...♕xf5 29.♕xd4 ♕b1+ 30.♕g1, important to notice, I am also up a piece) with 29.♖f1 and end up with an extra piece.

■ ■ ■

On Board 2 for the United States, Wesley So was once again a formidable force. He scored 7½ points from 11 games. In the match against the Netherlands, he played a pivotal role in the 3-1 victory of the USA, winning an instructive game against Erwin l'Ami.

NOTES BY
Wesley So

Wesley So
Erwin l'Ami
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (3)
Ruy Lopez, Berlin Defence

This was my second Olympiad as a player and the excitement is hard to describe. The buzzing sound from hundreds and hundreds of players in the same venue is like electricity and you feel as if your whole body is continually vibrating. Teams from all over the world sitting next to each other shoulder to shoulder is thrilling, distracting and full of surprises.
From your seat at home, drinking a beer while monitoring your favourite chess engines, it seems simple, doesn't it? Higher rated should automatically beat lower rated, right? But playing chess like this takes nerves of steel under really thick skin. It's hard to even think, much less concentrate! Mental energy zapping out into the atmosphere was hitting everyone indiscriminately with either brain freeze or brain melt. I felt our team (myself specifically) could have done better, so I am very happy that we did more than just survive and actually won the Silver Medal!
This game was played in Round 3 against the powerful Netherlands team led by Super GM Anish Giri. The day before, our team barely escaped against the young and underrated Georgia 3.

1.e4
I was feeling good. Erwin l'Ami plays the Sicilian and the Caro-Kann, too, but my teammates and I looked at his games and expected the reply 1...e5. Erwin is a very well-prepared player, because he has been a researcher and a second of Anish for a couple of years now. In preparation for the game I also looked at Anish's openings ☺.

1...e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6
He also plays the normal Ruy Lopez with 3...a6. I thought there was a good chance that I would see it today.

4.d3
Black usually holds quite well in the Berlin endgame. In the Olympiad, for example, White scored a dismal one loss and three draws in games in which he chose to go for the endgame.

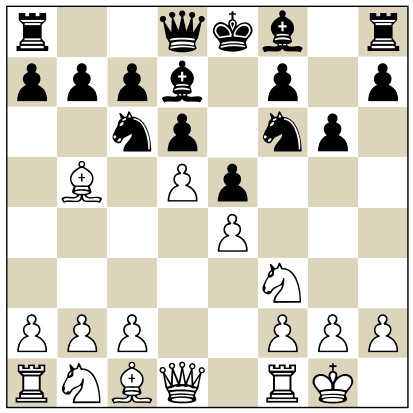
4...d6 A big surprise! Everyone plays 4...♗c5 here, which seems simplest. I didn't see the logic of choosing 4...d6 today, unless Black had some special preparation just for me.

5.0-0 g6?! This seems dubious to me. The main line is 5...♗d7, and I

believe this is a better move-order. White has to spend time on ♖e1 in order to get what we had in the game: 6.♖e1 g6 7.d4 ♗g7 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♗xd7+ ♘xd7, and here in many lines the rook is not doing much on e1.

6.d4 ♗d7 I had this position back in 2015, with an advantage against Nakamura in a playoff game in Las Vegas after 6...exd4 7.e5 dxe5 8.♘xe5. That's how I knew 5...g6 was dubious.

7.d5



Gaining space and aiming for a favourable structure. Trading the light-squared bishops seems like a big achievement in the ensuing King's Indian-like structure, because it hardly ever happens in that opening.

7...♘e7 7...♘b8 has to be taken into consideration.

8.♗xd7+ ♘xd7 8...♕xd7 is possibly preferable, when I have to spend time protecting the e4-pawn with ♖e1 or ♕e2. Black can then finish his kingside development, and later aim for counterplay with ...♘h5 or ...c6.

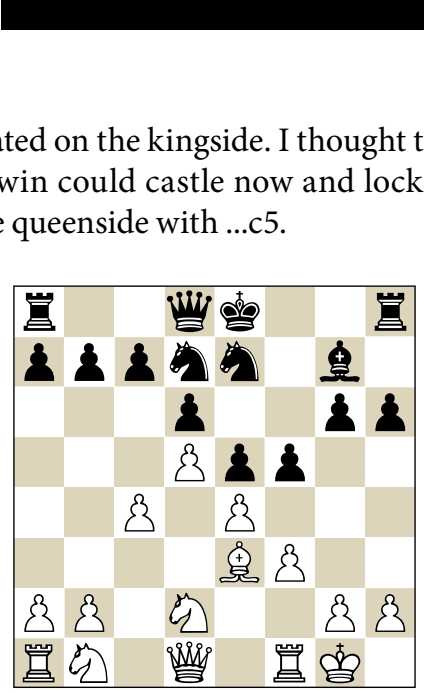
9.c4 ♗g7 10.♗e3 h6 He has to spend a tempo on this, otherwise ...f5 will always be met by ♘g5.

11.♘fd2 f5 12.f3

White has come out of the opening with a decent advantage. I have more space, and without the light-squared bishops I'm not afraid of getting mated on the kingside. I thought that Erwin could castle now and lock up the queenside with ...c5.

ALINA L'AMI

Wesley So didn't mind adding some more tension by reading a Jonathan Kellerman novel before the game.

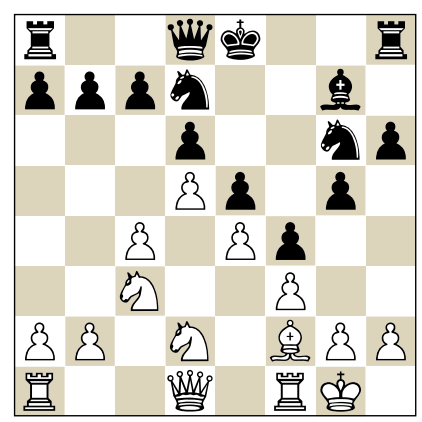


'From your seat at home, drinking a beer while monitoring your favourite chess engines, it seems simple, doesn't it?'

♗f6-g5, to try to exchange the bad bishop, also seems like a solid plan. However, he has other more aggressive ideas.

12...f4 13.♗f2 g5 14.♘c3 ♘g6

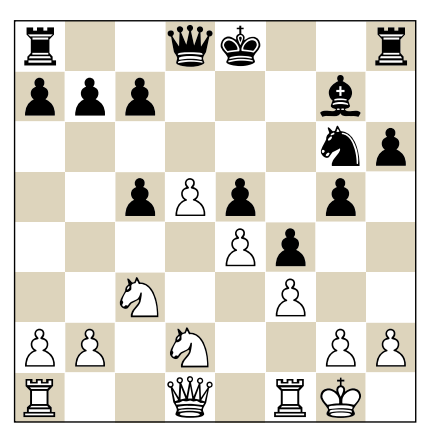
I don't think Black has enough resources to launch a successful mating attack, but just to be sure I decided to strike first and quickly. Offence is the best defence!



15.c5!?

Attraction to the idea (plus perhaps some miscalculation in the ensuing lines) convinced me that I had to sacrifice my pawn. The preparatory 15.b4 or 15.♖c1 was better, but as I said, I wanted to attack first!

15...♘xc5 16.♗xc5 dxc5



17.♕b3

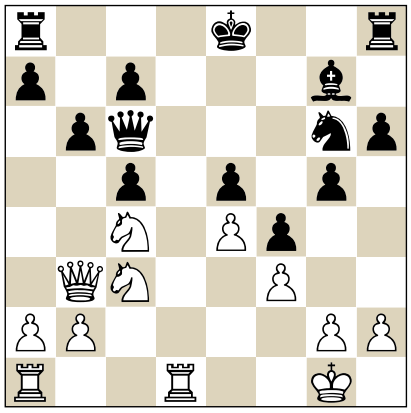
The computer gives the ultra-sophisticated line 17.♕a4+ ♕d7 18.♕b3 b6 19.a4 0-0 20.a5, when the queen is worse on d7 than on d8.

17...b6 18.d6 This is the only way to prevent him from castling. I didn't really have much of a choice but to sac a second pawn!

18...♕xd6 19.♘c4 ♕c6

The queen hides here, firmly shielded by Black's pawns. Two pawns is a lot of material to sacrifice, and I was thinking that I could possibly be worse if I didn't act quickly. My consolation is that his king remains in the centre for the time being. He could also have gone for 19...♕e6, when I'd have to play accurately and concretely, starting with 20.♘b5.

20.♖fd1 Now Black has many options. Almost every logical move is possible here, but when you have three or four good moves, it's not simple to choose. Erwin now went astray.



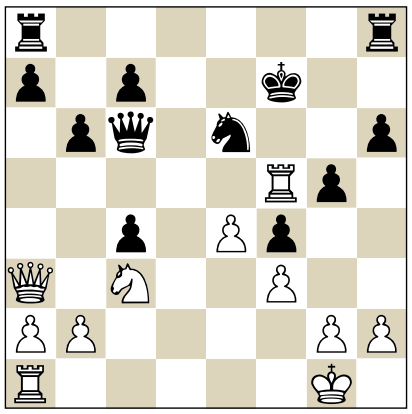
20...♘f8?

If Black can get this knight to d4, he is just winning, but it just won't work.

21.♖d5 ♘e6 22.♘xe5 ♗xe5 23.♖xe5 c4 Mistakes often come in pairs. Now Black loses the outpost on d4, too. Well, it wasn't an easy decision to play 23...♔f7 and allow the knight to be pinned, but apparently it was better: 23...♔f7 24.♘d5 ♖hd8 25.♖d1 ♕d6 26.♖f5+ ♔g7 27.♕c3+ ♘d4. I calculated up to here during the game, and stopped. Now 28.h4 is a fine move, leading to a better endgame in the ensuing lines.

24.♕a3 Such a fine turnaround! Instead of being two pawns down and facing a compact pawn structure, I'm only a pawn down with active pieces to boot. I was very pleased.

24...♔f7 25.♖f5+



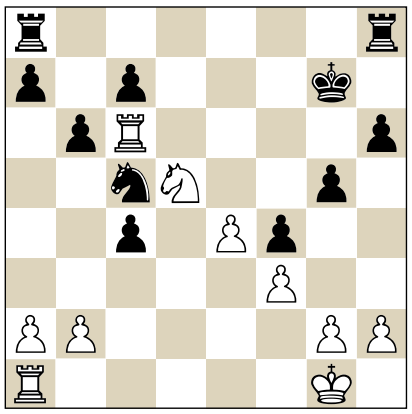
25...♔g6

25...♔g8 is apparently a better defence to prevent the king from running into checks later. But it's a hard move to find! After 26.♘d5 he is saved by 26...♕c5 (check!), and after 26.♕e7, by 26...♖f8. It's just normal instinct to put the pieces on more active squares.

26.♘d5 ♕c5+ 27.♕xc5 ♘xc5 28.♖f6+

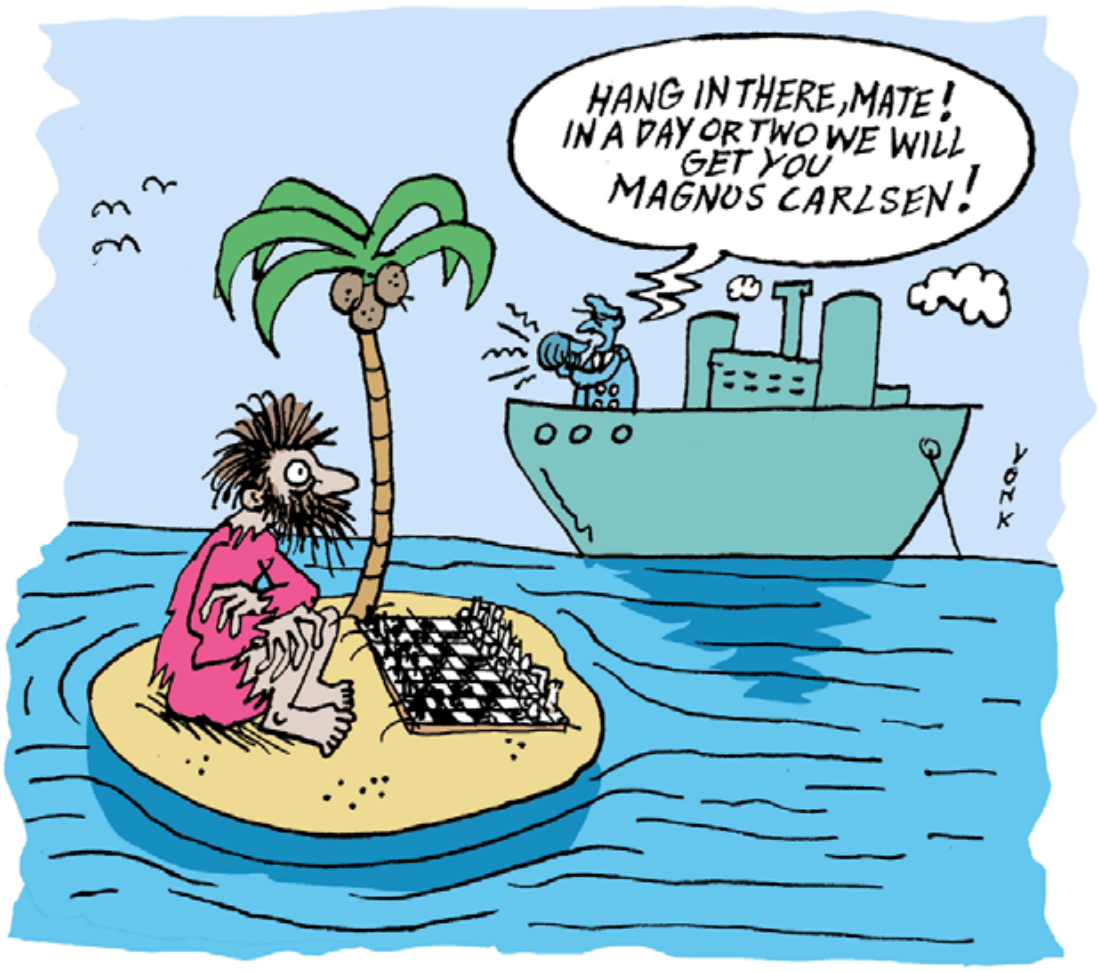
Gaining a crucial tempo. This is why g6 is a bad square for his king.

28...♔g7 29.♖c6



White should be winning easily here, since both black c-pawns will shortly fall. But as usual I managed to make the game much more difficult! Match situation now: on our black boards Fabiano made a comfortable draw against Anish (Berlin Defence), while Hikaru didn't look like he'd have much trouble defending the endgame against Loek van Wely.

With White on Board 4, Sam Shankland didn't seem to have anything going against Jorden van Foreest for most of the game. But then disaster struck. In an endgame that should be drawn with precise play, Jorden went for a combination that resulted in his knight being trapped on the b2-square! It led to a



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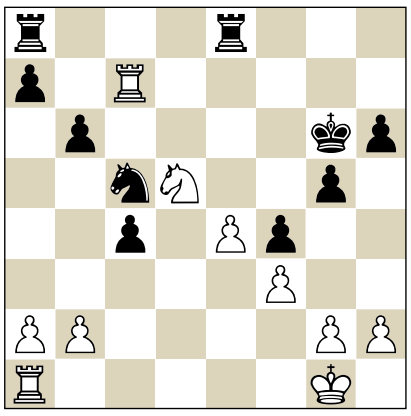
totally lost endgame. This lifted some pressure off my shoulders, and at this point I was optimistic that we'd win the match.

29...♖he8 30.♖xc7+ I was busy spending the majority of my time looking for the forced win after 30.♘xc7 ♖ec8 31.♖c1 ♖ab8 32.♖xc4 ♔h7. Now 33.b4 wins. But it's not very practical, since what I played, or 30.♖c1, should be sufficient.

30...♔g6



31.h4

I spent time looking for alternatives to 31.♖c1, when I saw the line 31.♖c1 ♖ad8 32.♖xc4 ♖xd5!! 33.exd5 ♖e1+ 34.♔f2, and now 34...♘d3 is a very pretty mate. I thought this was an elegant trick that Erwin had prepared.

31...♖ad8

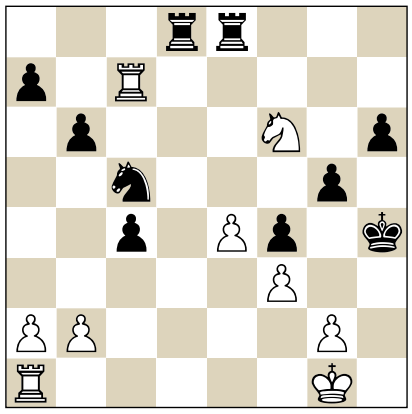
Black doesn't have much in the way of alternatives but to sac an exchange. My idea was just to pick up his vulnerable pawn with ♖c1.

32.h5+

In fact, I shouldn't have grabbed the exchange. I will never be able to explain why I refrained from the simple 32.♖c1, when life is as sweet and rosy as can be. If I was Black, I would probably just resign here: 32...♖xd5 (32...♖d6 33.♖xc4 a5 is obviously far from any sort of fortress ☺) 33.exd5 ♘d3 34.♖1xc4 ♖e1+ 35.♔h2 ♘f2, and obviously White has both 36.♖c1 and 36.g4.

32...♔xh5 33.♘f6+ ♔h4

Here I had less than 10 minutes left to make it to move 40 (though we also had 30 second increments, so no worries). I was trying to go for mate, and was about to play ♔h2. But in the end my courage failed.



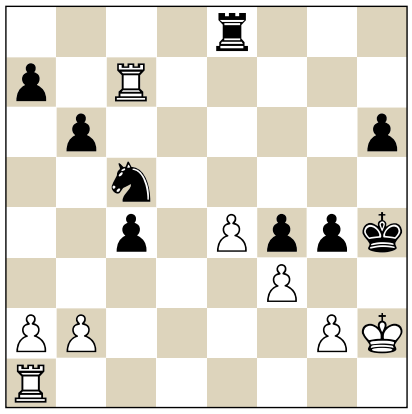
34.♘xe8

After 34.♔h2 g4 (Black could easily run into mate, for example: 34...♖e6 35.♖h1 g4 36.♖g7 and mate; 34...♘d3 35.♘g4 h5 36.♖h1 looks pleasing, too. Black could either get mated on h3 or h7) 35.♖g7 g3+ 36.♔g1 h5 37.♘xe8 ♖xe8 38.♔f1 Black can resign.

34...♖xe8 35.♔h2?!

What I played doesn't throw away the win, but the simplest way was 35.♖d1. Clearly, rooks belong on open files.

35...g4



36.♖h1

Now my rook is going to be entombed here for a while.

36.♖g7 was my first intention, but I changed my mind when I saw that his rook would get to the second rank. But the computer says that I can just grab some pawns: 36.♖g7 g3+ 37.♔g1 ♖d8 38.♖g4+ ♔h5 39.♖xf4 ♖d2. I stopped calculating here. 40.♖g4! ♖xb2, and now 41.♖d1, is the human way to win, but the computer gives 41.♖xg3 c3 42.♔h2 c2 43.♖g8 ♘d3 44.♖c1 ♘xc1 45.♔h3, and mate.

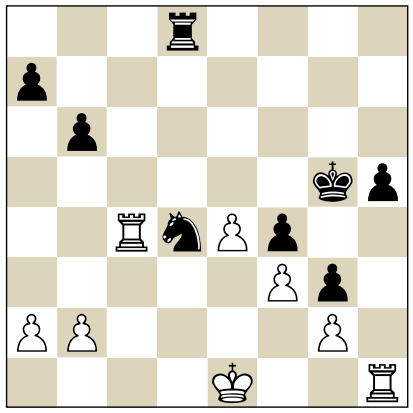
36...g3+ 37.♔g1+ ♔g5 38.♔f1

I didn't want to run into any checkmates today.

38...♖d8 39.♔e2

39.♔e1 is far stronger, according to the computer. But it seems too sophisticated to find.

39...♘e6 40.♖xc4 ♘d4+ 41.♔e1 h5



Finally we got past move 40 and had 30 minutes added to our clocks. Time to reassess what was going on.

42.♖c7

Threatening 43.♖h7, forcing Black to spend a tempo.

42...♔g6

This feels very natural. I threaten ♖h7, and he prevents me from doing so.

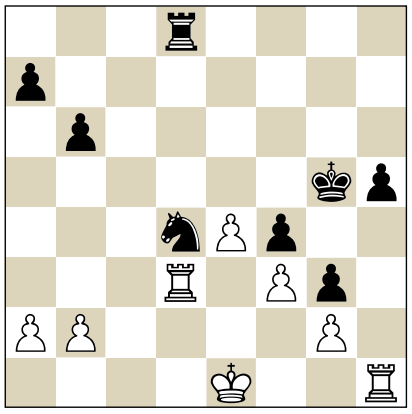
I think he could have defended better. 42...h4 seems more tenacious. I'm going to show one funny line here: 43.♖h3! is best, don't ask why. 43...a6, and now 44.a3! is best, again just giving Black the move: 44...a5. After 45.a4! Black is apparently in some kind of zugzwang. 45...♖d6 is met by 46.♖c8, and moving the rook away from the d-file is met by 46.♖h7 or 46.♖g7. But if it were White's turn right now, the win wouldn't be clear-cut.

43.♖c3

It's not hard to find blunders in this position: 43.♖xa7?? ♘c2+ 44.♔e2 ♘d4+ forces the draw, since 45.♔f1 loses to 45...♖c8. Or 43.♖h4?? ♘xf3+ 44.gxf3 ♖d1+ 45.♔xd1 g2, when a queen is coming up.

43...♔g5 44.♖d3!

Now I'm back on track. Trading rooks looks like leading to a winning endgame, and otherwise Black has no way to improve his position.

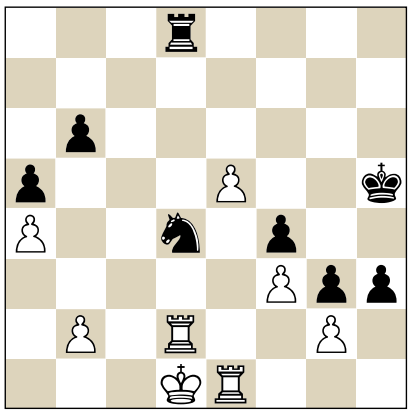


44...h4 I was very surprised to see this, as I thought he had to go 44...♘c2+ and take his chances in the rook vs knight ending.
44...♘c2+ leads by force to the position I spent a long time calculating: 45.♔d2 ♖xd3+ 46.♔xd3 ♘e3 47.e5! ♘xg2 48.e6 ♔f6 49.♖xh5 ♔xe6 50.♔e4 ♔f6. I was not 100% sure what was going on here. The comp gives many easy wins, such as 51.a4 or 51.♖h8 right away. I guess all it requires here is good endgame technique, but I was concerned that I'd overlook something.

45.♔d1
Now Black can't get out of the pin and all resulting rook vs knight endings should be lost.

45...a5 46.a4 ♖d6 47.e5 ♖d8 48.♖d2
No need to rush here; just making sure to control his passed pawns.

48...♔h5 49.♖e1 h3



50.gxh3
There is no need to go for 50.e6 ♘xe6 51.♖xe6 h2 52.♖e1, which looks like a funny position.

50...♔h4 51.e6 ♘xe6 52.♖xe6
Black resigned.

■ ■ ■

Poland made a great impression, and so did their first board Jan-Krzysztof Duda. His final score was a negative one (minus-1), but a closer look at his games shows how satisfied he could be. As he put it himself, he almost played a Candidates tournament, with three of his opponents rated 2800+ and another five rated 2700+. The way he saved his skin against Levon Aronian will not easily be forgotten.

NOTES BY
Jan-Krzysztof Duda

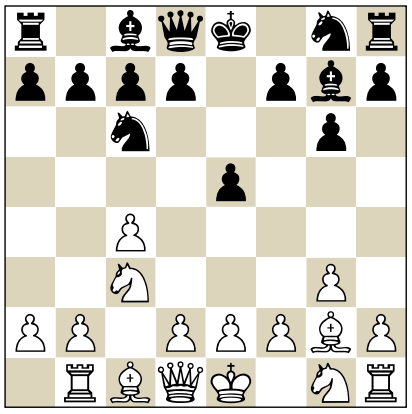
Levon Aronian
Jan-Krzysztof Duda
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (8)
English Opening, Reversed Sicilian

Before the game, I was fully aware that Levon Aronian might play practically any 1st move, and that it was way too hard for me to guess beforehand which move that would be, so I only looked at 1.d4 and 1.e4, preparing some sharp variations that needed a lot of memorization. So, logically, after 1.c4 I was already playing on my own. Not to be recommended against a 2780 guy ever ☺.

1.c4 e5
After 1...♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 I've got bluffed (out-prepared?) with the sharp 3.e4 Flohr-Mikenas Variation far too many times. This is playable, of course, but only after some deep opening prep. Vladimir Kramnik played this against me in Dortmund, for example. I need to warn the readers, however, not to use this trick against me anymore, because next time I will be solidly prepared!

2.g3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 g6 I quickly decided to choose the variation that I had had trouble breaking as White in my prep against Ivanchuk. The problem was that I hardly ever play the Closed Sicilian as White, and now I'm a full tempo down. No wonder I got quickly and comprehensively outplayed by Levon.

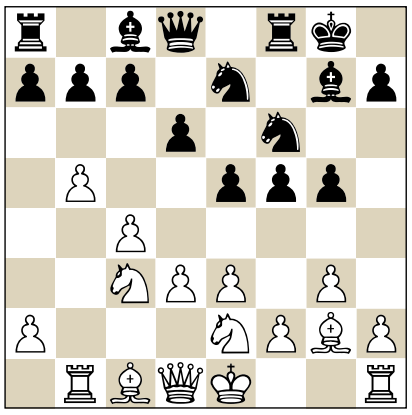
4.♗g2 ♗g7 5.♖b1!
Played instantly and getting me out of book. I had expected moves like 5.♘f3 ♘f6 or 5.e3 d6 6.♘ge2.



5...d6
I was wondering if it was worth inserting ...a5 here. On the one hand, my rook would be less passive on a8, but on the other, I thought White's queenside play could be quicker, and the a-file would be occupied. As it transpired, Black can hardly play without ...a6, and I played it later.

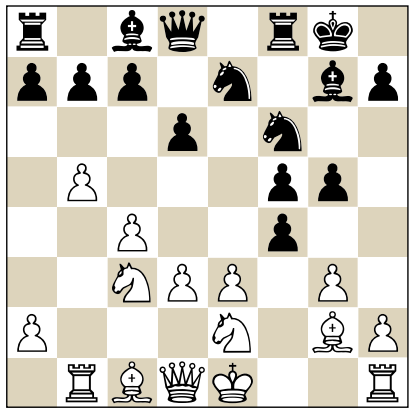
6.b4 f5 7.b5 ♘ce7 8.d3
This surprised me a bit, because I thought he could have played with the pawn on d2, keeping the option of going d4 open. It's not a big deal, however.

8...♘f6 9.e3 0-0 10.♘ge2 g5?!
I rushed this move, and pretty soon regretted it. Probably the way to go was to open the a-file and play ...c6-d5 a.s.a.p.



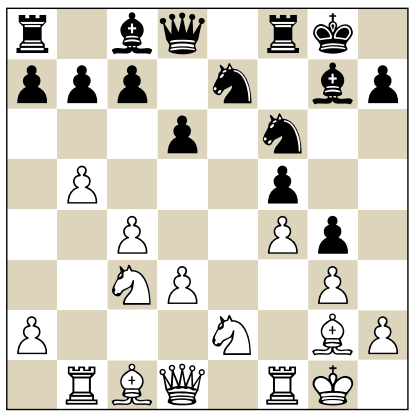
11.f4
Perhaps not even necessary, but a logical move that stops Black's kingside offensive. Here I realized that I needed to be careful, because in some variations I can be attacked myself.

11...exf4
11...gxf4 12.exf4 felt uncomfortable to me. And after 11...h6 12.0-0 the question is, what next?



12.exf4 12.gxf4 gxf4 (12...g4?! 13.h3, and White is better on both sides of the board) 13.♘xf4 ♘g6 14.♘cd5 is also nice for White, but the game continuation is simpler.

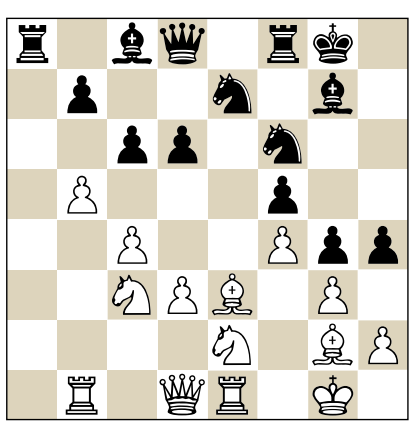
12...g4 13.0-0



I think this position can be safely assessed as ±. Black lacks any visible improvements, while White is gaining more and more space. Not seeing a clear plan, I decided to march with the h-pawn.

13...h5 14.♖e1 h4 15.♗e3 Simple and efficient development. **15...a6** Black can hardly play without this move. Now White is not even obliged to take on b5 with the a-pawn, but what Levon did is fine, of course.

16.a4 axb5 17.axb5 c6



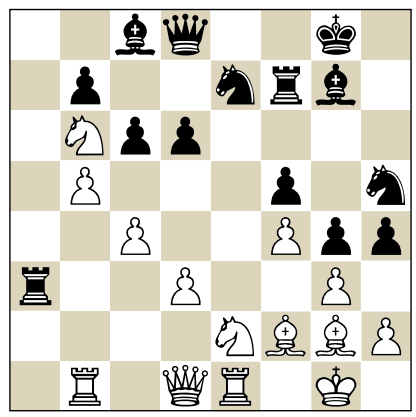
In an ideal world, Black would love to get a rock-solid pawn on d5 after inserting ...h3 first, when White's light-squared bishop on h1 would be dead. In reality, it's not possible, and White is going to attack soon.

18.♘a4 ♖f7 I always liked these kinds of moves, which defend everything. But here Black is being outplayed, and is just marking time.

19.♗f2

19.♗b6! ♕f8 20.♗f2 may have been super-accurate, but I didn't like it.

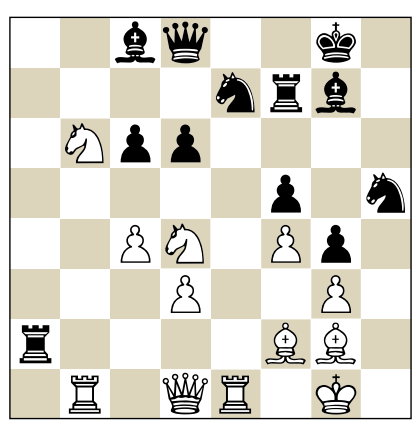
19...♘h5 20.♘b6 ♖a3



Not the perfect place for the rook, but here it cannot easily be harassed.

21.bxc6 bxc6 22.♘d4 hxg3 23.hxg3 ♖a2!

Black's position would collapse but for this move. Black is of course still suffering, but at least he's got some activity, activity he's been chasing for so many moves. Now White has a wide choice, and I think my opponent made the wrong decision.



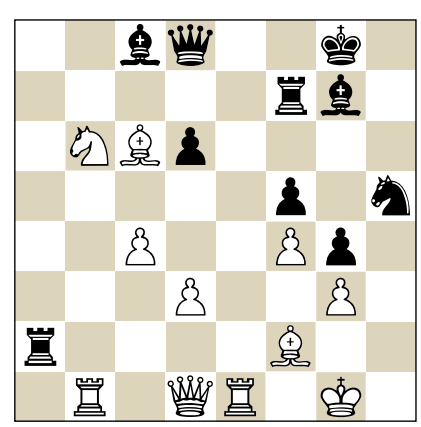
24.♘xc6? Objectively, this move is sufficient for White to get a better endgame, but the position gets super-complicated, and only computers feel comfortable in it.

NEW IN CHESS

After one move Jan-Krzysztof Duda was already on his own. 'Not to be recommended against a 2780 guy.'

24.♘xc8! was simple and strong. After 24...♕xc8 25.♘e6 ♗c3 26.♖e2!? ♖xe2 27.♕xe2 White is both more active and positionally better.

24...♘xc6 25.♗xc6



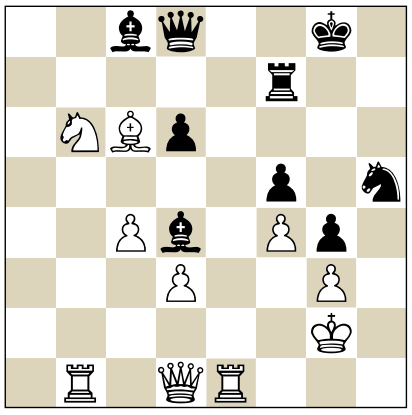
25...♖xf2!

The point. Black sacrifices the exchange and in return gets a monstrous dark-squared bishop and a

powerful attack. I find this position to be aesthetically very pleasing.

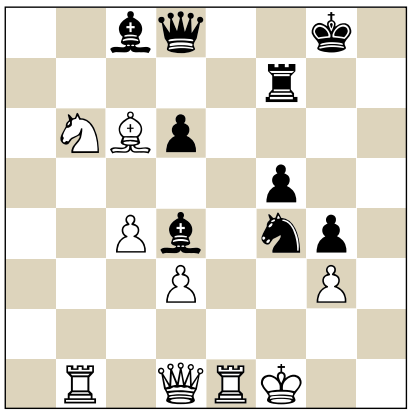
26.♔xf2 Of course, 6.♖e8+?? is very bad for White: 26...♕xe8 27.♗xe8 ♗d4 28.♗xf7+ ♔xf7 29.♕e1 ♖b2+ 30.♔f1 ♘xg3+!, and Black wins.

26...♗d4+ 27.♔g2



Here I thought my position was lost. When I first calculated this variation, I had in mind 27...♗xb6, but then spotted that both 28.♕b3 and 28.c5 would win simply. Then I found 27...♘xf4+ 28.♔f1 ♖h7, but 29.♕d2! crushes. Only then did the truly wonderful 28...♗b7 appear to me!

27...♘xf4+ 27...♗b7 is the same thing, just with a different move order. **28.♔f1**



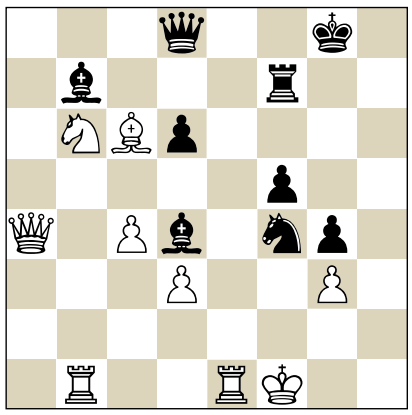
28...♗b7!!

Magic. The knight on f4 is hanging, ♖e8+ is on the agenda, and Black is calmly developing another piece!

Seeing nothing better than a perpetual, as happened in the game, I completely missed 29.♕a4!, which Levon calculated for quite some time. Luckily for me, the Armenian wasn't in top form at the Olympiad, otherwise I could have been punished for my recklessness.

29.♗xb7

Basically a draw offer. Objectively, White should have gone for 29.♕a4!,



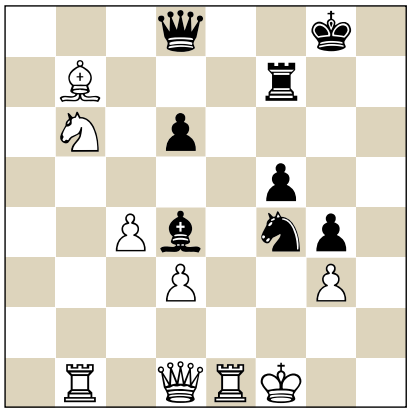
ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

which is very hard to play in a real game. White is under a huge attack, but somehow he is holding his own!

Levon mentioned two moves here, which turned out to be the top choices of the engine:

– 29...♔g7 30.♘d5!. Yet again this defensive resource: 30...♘h5 31.c5!! ♘xg3+ 32.♔g2 ♗xc6 33.♕xd4+ ♕f6 34.♕xf6+ ♖xf6 35.♔xg3 ♗xd5 36.d4, and White has got a better endgame, which might be drawn, but I think it's a difficult one to defend for Black over the board.

– 29...♕g5 is losing, but White needs to play super-accurately: 30.♘d5! ♕h6 31.♘xf4 ♕h2 32.♘g2! ♕xg3 33.♖e2! ♖h7 34.♖e8+ ♔f7 35.♖xb7+ ♔g6 36.♖g8+! ♔f6 37.♖f8+ ♔g5 38.♖xf5+! ♔xf5 39.♕a5+ ♗c5 40.♕xc5+! dxc5 41.♗e4+ ♔e5 42.♖xh7, with a winning endgame.



29...♘h5!!

The point! The threat of ...♘xg3+ and ...♕h4 is so strong that White can't avoid repetition.

30.♔g2 ♘f4+ 31.♔f1 ♘h5 32.♔g2 ♘f4+

Draw.

What can be said about this game? Definitely, I was under pressure during the entire game. I was outplayed strategically in 10 moves. When things were looking really bad, I managed to find a really spectacular way to sharpen the game – something I'm very good at. It must be said, however, that in better form, Levon would possibly have crushed me.

After the sacrifices the position was so beautiful that I couldn't help but share it with the readers!

■ ■ ■

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At the Olympiad in Baku, Baadur Jobava won the gold medal on Board 1 in his inimitable original style. This time, the most 'Jobava-like' game he played was one he lost. Inspired by the interview that the Georgian gave after his success two years ago, Sarunas Sulskis played what was probably the most spectacular game of this Olympiad.

NOTES BY
Sarunas Sulskis

Baadur Jobava
Sarunas Sulskis
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (4)
Nimzowitsch-Larsen Attack

In Round 4 of the Chess Olympiad, the team of Lithuania, modestly seeded number 50, had to meet the mighty, to our standards, Georgian first team (seeded 14th). Even more intimidating than our respective seeding, however, was the mighty backing of the entire Georgian host nation. During the wonderful Opening Ceremony, numerous Georgian officials, the country's President included, contemplated the rich Georgian chess tradition, beautifully embodied in Nona Gaprindashvili, Maya Chiburdanidze and other celebrities, implying they were on a quest for a continuation.

Words can be elusive, but Georgia's flagship team had a real person to rely on: the jovial virtuoso Baadur Jobava, who had stolen the show at the last Olympiad in Baku in 2016, winning the gold medal on Board 1.

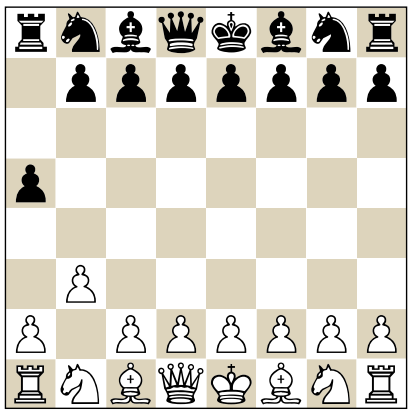
Despite having played a few games against Baadur and getting to know this joyful soul a bit in the process, I had found the interview with Baadur by New In Chess 2016/7, conducted right after his triumph in Baku, highly revealing and therefore useful before our face-off.

1.b3

Jobava's pet move. During my prep I had reckoned with other stuff too, such as 1.d4 d5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♗f4, which had helped him to beat Topalov and Ponomariov in Baku on his road to gold. Against Larsen's move I had conceived a smart idea to turn the tiresome preparation less boring...

1...a5!?

Though it looks highly unusual, this nonchalant response isn't a novelty, either generally or personally. I had used it some 10 years ago against the then still active Czech GM Pavel Blatny in Pardubice. I swear I hadn't intended at all to meet his 1.b3 with such flagrant nonsense, but he provoked me by turning up some 40-45 minutes late to the game. Sadly, there was no default time back then in Pardubice...

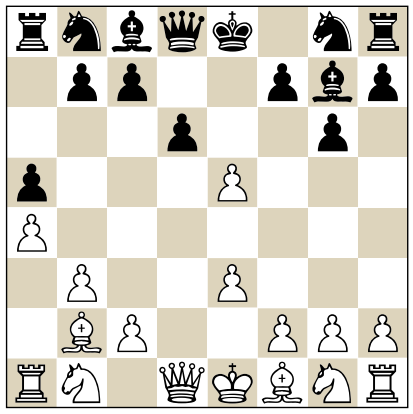


2.a4?

Jobava's biggest mistake comes quite early. I had thrown the rook pawn forward, mainly for team reasons. The bulk of the Lithuanian players were really young and inexperienced, having barely reached 20 years. Playing against heavy odds with Georgia 1, I didn't want them to feel tense or doomed in the match. The common-sense rule suggested we should lose that match miserably, which is why I decided to brutally violate common-sense rules so early on in the game. To my amazement, Baadur responded to sheer neglect and rudeness with the politeness of a gentleman. Sorry, Baadur, it was the wrong way to go...

Instead, 2.e4 or 2.♗b2 a4 3.e4 were alternatives to ignore Black's pawn push.

2...e5 3.♗b2 d6 4.e3 g6 5.d4 ♗g7 6.dxe5



6...♘d7

Black is on firm ground for a tussle on the long diagonal.

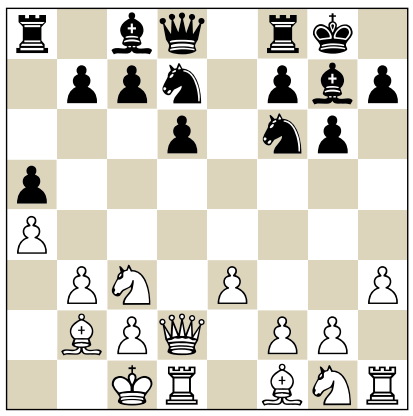
After 6...♗xe5 I was worried about 7.♘c3, followed by ♘f3, and I would end up losing time withdrawing my valuable bishop to g7.

During the game, I seriously considered 6...dxe5 as a worthy alternative, but 7.♕xd8+ ♔xd8 8.♘f3 ♘d7 9.♘g5! ♘h6 10.♗c4 brings forth some first inconveniences.

7.♘c3 ♘xe5 8.♕d2 ♘f6 9.0-0-0 0-0

With simultaneous castling on opposite wings, the prerequisites for a bloody fight are set.

10.h3 ♘ed7

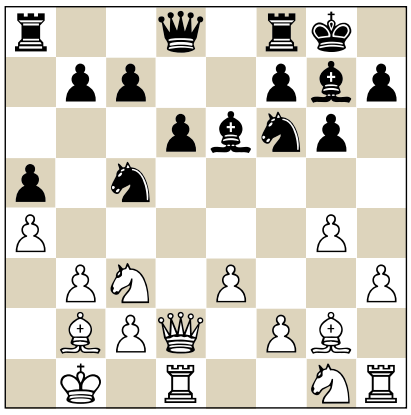


This looks odd, but I had seen this knight manoeuvre ...♘e5-d7-c5-e4 as a very young man in one of Vishy Anand's games far back in the day in some Indian Defence line. As an aspiring teenager, I was possibly fascinated by it.

11.g4 ♘c5 12.♗g2

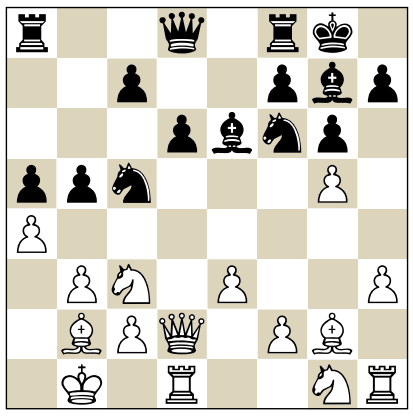
Baadur, naturally, puts e4 under lock and key.

12...♗e6
Starting out on a wild king hunt with the childish threat 13...♗xb3, but I promise you that the next black move will be that of a man...
13.♔b1

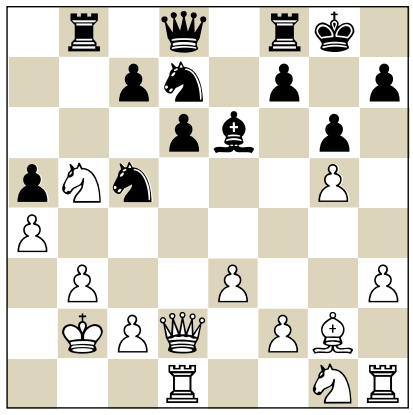


13...b5!?
In terms of courage, this double sacrifice perhaps deserves a positive assessment, but it is very risky. Bridges get burned and in order to keep his attack running, Black will need further heavy investments.
14.g5
With this intermediate move, Baadur certainly expected to throw a spanner in my calculation works: 14.♘xb5 ♘fe4! 15.♕e1 ♗xb2 16.♔xb2 ♕f6+ 17.♔b1 ♕xf2 and 14.♗xa8 ♕xa8 15.♘ge2 bxa4, and Black attacks, but at the cost of lavishly spending time to assess the risks of my king storm. I was deeply focused and had foreseen 14.g5.

'Your young teammates may suddenly lose faith in your actions and instead of regarding them as bold, suddenly deem them just crazy.'

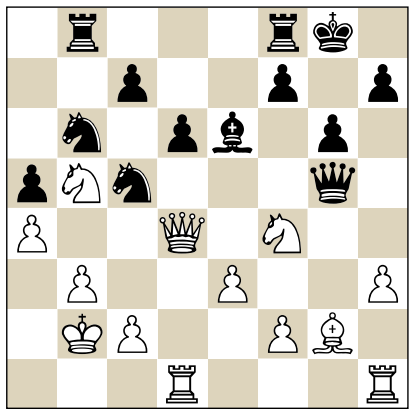


14...♘fd7
14...bxa4!? 15.gxf6 ♗xf6 16.♗xa8 ♕xa8 was another defying line I pondered, but ultimately rejected in view of 17.♘d5 ♗xb2 18.♔xb2 axb3 19.♕d4. I felt this was playable, but to play a rook down and to be threatened with checkmate in one from the start wasn't fun. Your young teammates may suddenly lose faith in your actions and instead of regarding them as bold, suddenly deem them just crazy.
15.♘xb5 ♗xb2 16.♔xb2 ♖b8



For the moment, things look reasonable. I have saved the exchange, deployed my rook against his king, and his g5-pawn is hanging.
17.♘e2
I had expected 17.f4, cementing his pawn chain on the kingside, but Baadur was probably worried about the picture of his king's knight & rook being jobless in the heat of the battle. I had planned 17...♘b6 anyway, with the threat of ...♘cxa4+, followed by ...♘c4+ looming over his royal family.
17...♕xg5 18.♘f4 ♘b6 19.♕d4
This central set-up was probably what he had had in mind when he gave me

back the pawn. I should calm down now and defend the c7-pawn, and then, after advancing his pawn to h5 or h6, he would assume control of the board again.

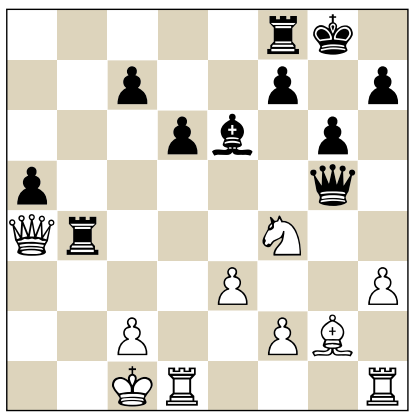


19...♘cxa4+! No way, Baadur!

20.bxa4 ♘xa4+

I had seen and painstakingly tried to make work the engine's favourite 20...c5, but found 21.♘xe6 fxe6 (after 21...♕xg2?? 22.♕g7 mate is very unpleasant) 22.♕e4 ♖xf2 23.♕xe6+ ♔h8 24.♗c6 ♘xa4+ 25.♔a3 not something I could rely on.

21.♕xa4 ♖xb5+ 22.♔c1 ♖b4

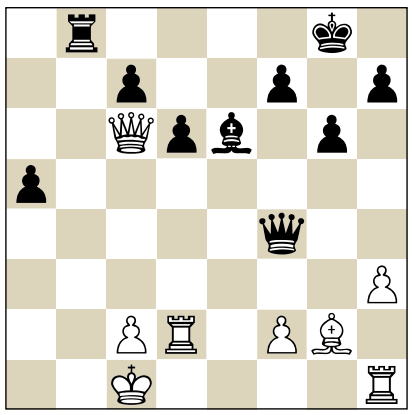


During my calculations before my 18th move I had thought that this would yield me a large advantage in view of the ...♖xf4 and ...♕xg2 idea, and that if I forced his intermediate 23.♘xe6, then 23...fxe6 would comfortably bring my other rook into action via the f-file. A move or two later, however, I understood what I had overlooked.

23.♕c6! The only move. The queen must protect the bishop.

23...♖xf4!? Another sacrifice, and a rook gets added to my material deficit. His knight was both cementing his defence lines and annoying me, but now that I know the result, I would have gone 23...♖fb8, with strong play along the b-file by way of compensation.

24.exf4 ♕xf4+ 25.♖d2 ♖b8



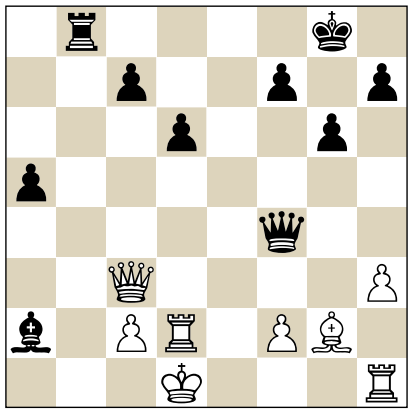
26.♕c3?! Played rather quickly, which surprised me given the complexity of the position.

I was planning to meet the greedy 26.♕xc7? with 26...♕b4, when 27.♖xd6? loses to a beautiful reply (after 27.♖d3 I continue 27...♕b2+ 28.♔d2 ♖c8!, and he will be left to lament his greed): 27...♕f4+ 28.♔d1 ♖b1+ 29.♔e2 ♗c4+.

I don't know why he didn't immediately try to shoulder my queen away from its dangerous position with 26.♕e4. I had intended to go 26...♗a2, but 27.c3 ♖b1+ 28.♔c2 ♖b2+ 29.♔xb2 ♕xd2+ 30.♕c2 seems to be game over for Black. Apparently he tried to upset my deep thinking by making some of his moves really fast.

26...♗a2! Now Black has a really dangerous attack.

27.♔d1



27...♗c4 I saw that 27...♖b1+ 28.♔e2 ♗c4+ 29.♖d3 ♖xh1 (or 29...♖b5) 30.♗xh1 a4 decreases my deficit and offers ample compensation for the piece, but I was curious to see whether Baadur wanted to repeat moves or misplace his queen in the corner.

He rose up from his chair, quickly glanced at his team mates' positions and, apparently not too pleased with what he saw, rejected the possible repetition at once in order to stop me from reaching move 40 too easily.

28.♕a1

28.♔c1 ♗a2 29.♔d1 ♗c4 would have been the road to peace, and I must admit I would probably have taken it, given the time-trouble I was already in. Moreover, the mission of harassing the Georgian leader had been accomplished regardless.

28...♕g5

continued on page 45

NEW IN CHESS

Sarunas Sulskis and the fine art of out-Jobavaing Jobava.

Young Iranian star is on a mission

Parham Maghsoodloo: 'In 2022 I will play the world title match'

DIRK JAN TEN GEUZENDAM

It's a habit he cannot resist. Once the clocks have been started and most players are trying to focus and get into their game, the first board player of Iran gets up as often as possible and starts wandering around the hall. Stopping here and there to cast an inquisitive look at the openings, Parham Maghsoodloo seems to be eager not to miss out on anything. As he makes his rounds, he inevitably gravitates to the top boards of the strongest teams of the Olympiad. The stars are fully aware of who the 18-year-old in his trademark sleeveless jacket is. His win in the recent Junior World Championship was impressive. Maghsoodloo scored 9½ points from his first 10 games. Only then, when he had already secured the title, did he suffer his only loss against Russia's Andrey Esipenko on the final day.

When Maghsoodloo won the junior world title, Nigel Short tweeted: 'It was obvious when I first met him in Anzali 2016 that he possessed a very special talent.' Short referred to a match tournament in Iran between an Iranian team and a 'Stars of the World' team. The Englishman had had trouble making a draw in the first round against Maghsoodloo, whom he then described as 'a monster'. Another foreign participant in Anzali, besides GMs like Romain Edouard, Ivan Sokolov and Alexey Dreev, was Evgeny Miroshnichenko.

'Miro' also has vivid memories of his first encounter with the Iranian phenomenon. 'The event started with a blitz tournament, in which I won a final-round rollercoaster game against Parham, only to find out that he had scored 8 points from the other 9 games. In the classical event, Nigel (Short) scored 8½ out of 10 for the 'World' team, but Parham's 8 out of 10 against the 'World' players was truly impressive. He was rated 2501 and performed close to 2700. Not only his result, but also the way he played left a deep impression.'

Miroshnichenko sees clear parallels with the great natural feeling for the game that was displayed by the young Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, and suggests that these parallels are a clear indication of his huge potential.

NEW IN CHESS

As the first moves are being made, Parham Maghsoodloo begins making his rounds, stopping here and there to cast an inquisitive look at the openings.

Hard worker

Maghsoodloo's current rating is 2685, and he certainly isn't banking only on his talent. He works hard on the game that he fell in love with when his father showed it to him when he was nine years old. He even claims that there was a time when he worked 12-15 hours a day, and even today it's 'not much less than 10 hours a day'.

At the Olympiad he was doing fine until he caught a severe cold and lacked the energy to show his best chess. But he's enjoyed the experience a lot as he watched as many games as possible. 'I think Bu Xiangzhi from China is very strong and underrated. He is playing over 2750, but I think he is only 2700. Many wins of China depended on his result.'

And he happily gives his prediction for the World Championship match in London. 'Four, five months ago I thought that Magnus would win, but now, after I watched Caruana's games here, I think he is in really good form.

It will be a very tough match. I think Carlsen will win with the smallest of margins, and it will be close, but Caruana has good chances.'

World Champion

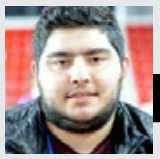
As for his own future, he doesn't lack confidence. 'I won eight of the last twelve tournaments that I played in. I am happy that I achieved my current rating and now I hope to play in more difficult tournaments, like Tata Steel in Wijk aan Zee coming January. '

And ultimately become World Champion?

'Yes, of course. I will try my best and hope to qualify for the Candidates Tournament in the World Cup in Khanty-Mansiysk (next year). If I don't manage, I think I will do it in the next cycle. I will play the world title match in 2022.'

And no matter when he will play for the world title, as far as he can see now, he will do so in a sleeveless jacket. 'Yes, these jackets give me a very good feeling. I have many of them. When I began to play at 10 years of age, I started wearing them and they always motivated me. I tried to play without them, but the results were not good.' He laughs. 'Without them I cannot play, because I am not in the right mood.'

In Batumi, Parham Maghsoodloo scored 6½/10 with a 2666 performance. In Round 5, he won an attractive attacking game against Estonian GM Kaido Kulaots.



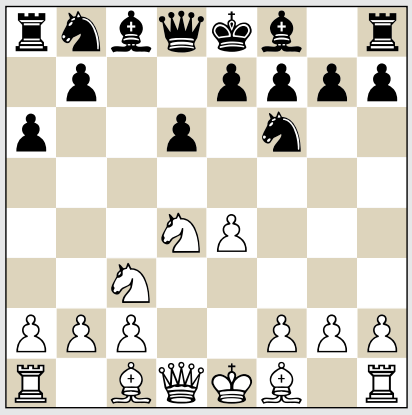
NOTES BY
Parham Maghsoodloo

Parham Maghsoodloo
Kaido Kulaots
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (5)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

1.e4

I chose to play 1.e4, because I wanted to play a sharp game. I felt physically very well and thought that if I could catch him in some theory that I know well, I might get a good result.

1...c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6

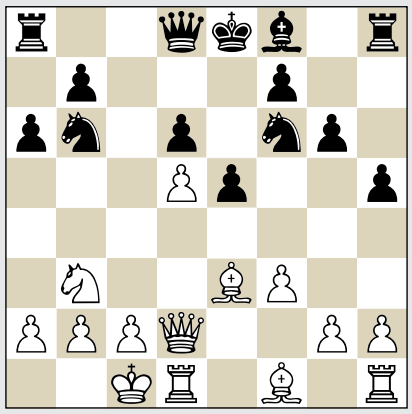


The Najdorf. I had expected 5...♘c6 and had mainly prepared for a Rauzer.

6.f3

At the World Junior Championship, I had won a game against Vavulin with 6.h3. And I also like playing 6.g3. But because of my preparation for the Rauzer I wanted to play something that he would probably not expect. I had looked at the 6.f3 variation two or three months earlier, but had not checked it before this game.

6...e5 7.♘b3 ♗e6 8.♗e3 h5 9.♘d5 ♗xd5 10.exd5 ♘bd7 11.♕d2 g6 12.0-0-0 ♘b6



This is all theory so far, and has been seen many times. With my next move I go for a pawn sacrifice that I believe is fine for White.

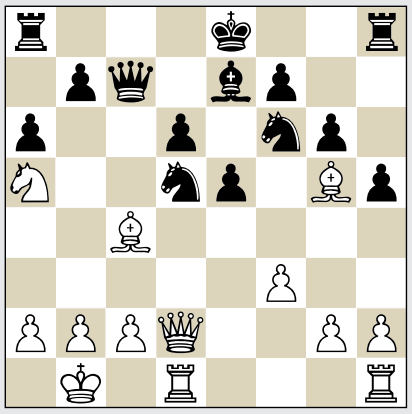
13.♔b1

13.♕a5 looks tempting but won't yield much: 13...♗h6 14.♗xh6 ♖xh6 15.♔b1 ♔f8, and Black is OK.

13...♘bxd5

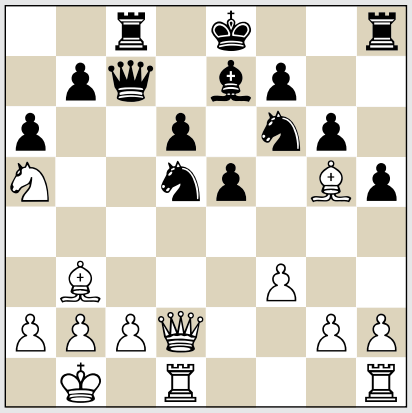
Taking with the other knight is also possible.

14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♘a5 ♕c7 16.♗c4



White has good compensation for the pawn. The bishop on c4 offers excellent attacking chances and promising tactical play. If Black doesn't know the theory, I will go g4 and h4 and this bishop on c4 will kill him.

16...♖c8 17.♗b3



17...0-0

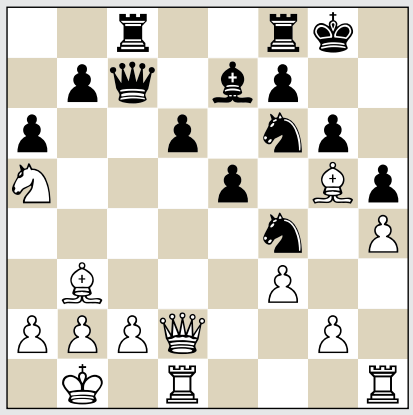
In my files I had 17...♔f8 as the best move, as I had checked with the engines, when chances are about equal. But this is a move that is very hard to find over the board.

18.h4

This is very strong. Also possible was 18.♗h6, but then Black gives the exchange with 18...♘b6 19.♗xf8 ♗xf8, with compensation. The position after 18.h4 appealed to me much more. I keep the pressure, have the bishop pair and will push g4.

18...♘f4

He could have played 18...b5, but after 19.♗xd5 ♘xd5 20.♕xd5 ♗xg5 21.hxg5 ♕xa5 22.g4, I don't see how Black can defend this position, because White has too many threats.



19.♘c4 This is my best move of this game, the key move in this position. The knight is on its way, via e3, to the d5-square. And on e3 the knight will also support g4 and a horrible attack.

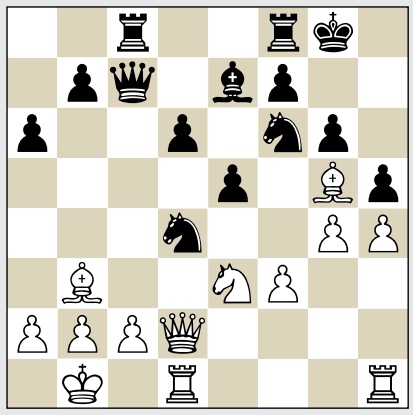
19...♘e6

The point is that he cannot play 19...d5 because of 20.♘xe5, when after 20...♕xe5 White can choose between 21.♖he1 and 21.♗xf4, with a much better position.

20.♘e3

The best move, continuing my plan. Clearly less good was 20.♗xf6 ♗xf6 21.♘xd6 ♖cd8 22.♗xe6 fxe6 23.♕c3 ♕xc3 24.bxc3 ♗e7 25.♘e4 ♗xh4 (or first exchange rooks on d1) 26.♖xd8 ♗xd8, and although the knight on e4 looks impressive, this is not much better for me, because I am also a pawn down.

20...♘d4 21.g4



This gives White a very dangerous attack, which I feel is winning. An engine may be able to defend this, but not a human.

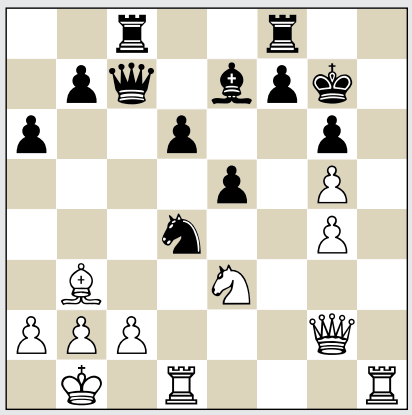
21...hxg4 22.fxg4

Also possible and winning was 22.♗xf6 ♗xf6 23.fxg4, but I played the text-move to give him a chance to miss that after 22...♘e4, I have 23.♕g2.

NEW IN CHESS

Ever since he was 10, Parham Maghsoodloo has been wearing sleeveless jackets. 'I tried to play without them, but the results were not good.'

22...♘xb3 Because after 22...♘e4 23.♕g2 ♘xg5 24.hxg5 ♔g7



ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

I have the beautiful move 25.♖h7+!, and Black is mated after 25...♔xh7 26.♕h3+ ♔g8 27.♖h1.

23.axb3 ♕d7 24.♕g2

Another good move. I want to keep the dark-squared bishop for the moment, because it exerts more pressure on him.

24...♘h7

Now White is winning in many ways. On the other hand, it's hard to suggest anything better for Black.

25.♘d5

Another way was 25.♗h6 ♖fe8 26.h5 (or 26.g5, and then h5).

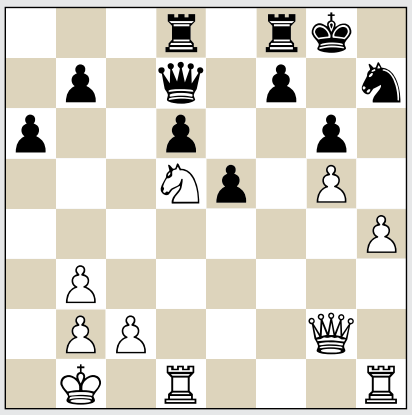
Allowing me to exchange bishops makes it really easy for me.

25...♗d8

After 25...♘xg5 26.hxg5 ♔g7 there would be 27.♖h7+ again.

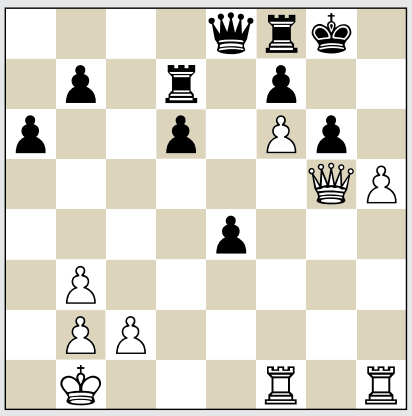
26.♗xd8 ♖cxd8 27.g5

There is no defence against h5.



27...♕e6 28.h5 ♖d7 29.♖df1

An important move, not allowing him to push his f-pawn to let the d7-rook help the defence. **29...e4** 29...f5 30.gxf6 is winning for White. **30.♘f6+ ♘xf6 31.gxf6 ♕e8 32.♕g5**

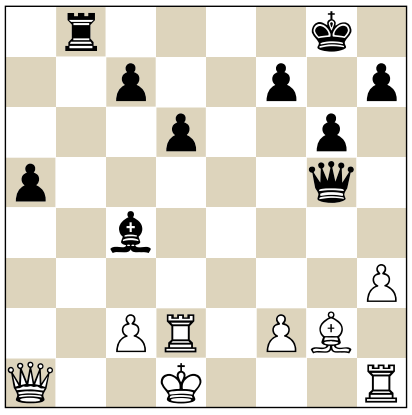


Black resigned.

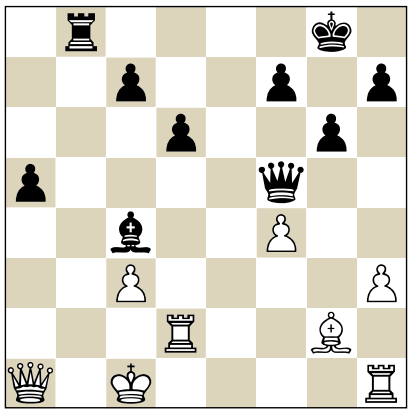
I felt very good that day, but unfortunately I came down with a really bad cold. When you are feeling bad, it is very hard to play good chess, and in the remaining rounds I did not do so well. ■

continued from page 41

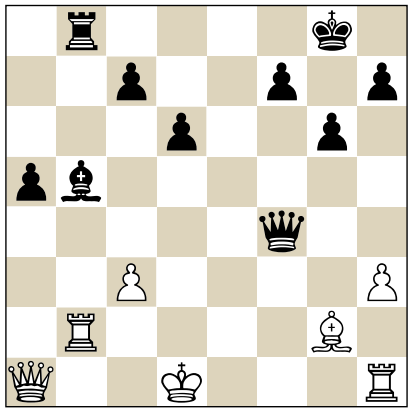
A move that was hard to make, but it is charged with lots of venom.



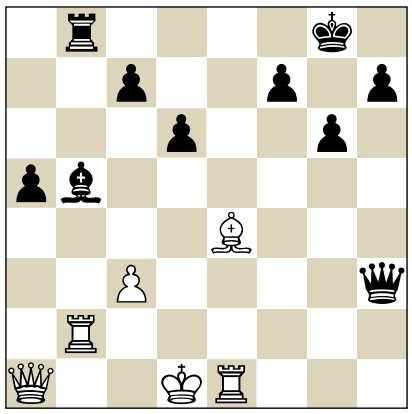
29.f4! There were the lovely twin variations 29.♗f3? ♕f6!! and 29.♗e4? ♕e5!, both winning outright.
On the other hand, I didn't really expect him to play the timid 29.f3?!, which would have made a fool of his own bishop.
29...♕f6! Fighting without my rook, I realized that I was quite likely to lose the game, so I rushed to make all the beautiful moves I saw.
I could have captured a fourth pawn with 29...♕xf4, but after 30.♖e1 I would no longer have the chance to drive him off the long diagonal so beautifully, because 30...♕f6? loses to 31.♖e8+ now.
30.c3
One must be, of course, a very small child to accept my Greek gift with 30.♕xf6?? ♖b1 mate, and I obviously had not at all expected Baadur to be one. But 30.♕c1 ♗a2 31.♕a3 ♕a1+! 32.♔e2 ♗c4+ would also have brought him irreparable harm.
30...♕f5 31.♔c1



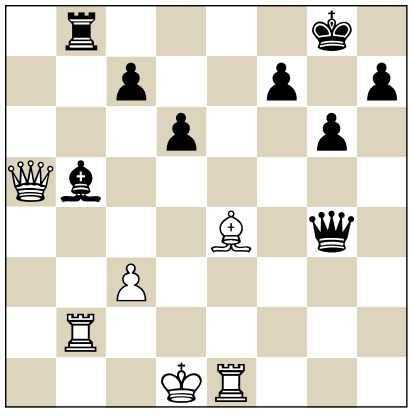
31...♗d3? Too hasty, but easily explained with your clock ticking down.
With 31...♕xf4, my attack would have raged on, for example 32.♕xa5 (or 32.♖e1 ♗d3!) 32...♗d3.
32.♖b2 ♕xf4+ 33.♔d1 ♗b5



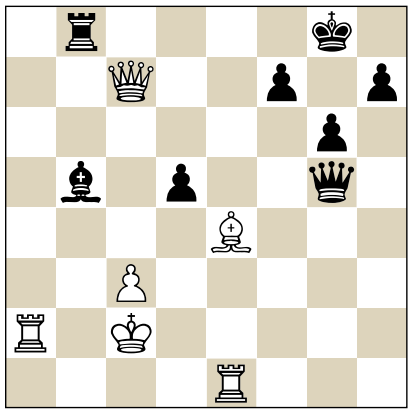
34.♖d2 Playing fast despite the wealth of time he still had, Baadur obviously wanted to prevent me from using his time resources.
In doing so, he clearly overlooked the fabulous 34.♗c6!?, which I had seen in my time-trouble and was terrified of, as in addition to playing a rook down for 10 long moves, I most probably would have had to make fresh sacrifices: 34...♗xc6 35.♖xb8+ ♔g7 36.c4+ ♔h6, with a wild mess on the board.
34...♕f5 35.♖e1 ♗d3
Again, I'm trying to get the better of him, and again he repulses me with the thematic ♖b2-d2-b2.
36.♖b2 ♗b5 37.♗e4! ♕xh3
Capturing the 5th pawn and eyeing the 6th one. But his next move gives me no respite. God, how I was wishing to reach the time-control unscathed and without some silly blunder!



38.♕xa5 ♕g4+? Damned time-trouble... 38...♕h5+ was called for, as it indirectly but very dangerously targets his queen: 39.♔d2 (39.♔c1? ♕g5+ 40.♖d2 ♗d3!! 41.♕xg5 ♖b1 mate would have been the cherry on the cake!) 39...♕h6+ 40.♔c2 ♕h2+ 41.♔c1 ♕f4+ 42.♔b1 ♗d3+! 43.♗xd3 ♖xb2+ 44.♔xb2 ♕d2+ 45.♔b3 ♕xe1 46.♕xc7, and this is roughly level.



39.♔c2! I had overlooked this light-square retreat and now had no reasonable checks left to safely reach the second session.
39...♕g5 40.♖a2 I had seen this smart rook shift, defending his queen, but it didn't make the job to find a reasonable last move before the time-control any easier.
40...d5 No doubt it was quite reasonable to drive his bishop away from its dominant post in the centre, but his next move was so unpleasant...
41.♕xc7



Only now did I have time to take stock. First of all, my dare-devil strategy to harass the entire Georgian team by violently assaulting their pride had borne its first fruit, since we were leading by 1½-½. And on Board 3, our young fellow Titas Stremavicius was calmly defending a slightly inferior bishop ending as Black against Ivan Cheparinov.

More alarmingly, I felt I was losing ground in my own game. But the successful efforts of my teammates gave me the strength to fight on.

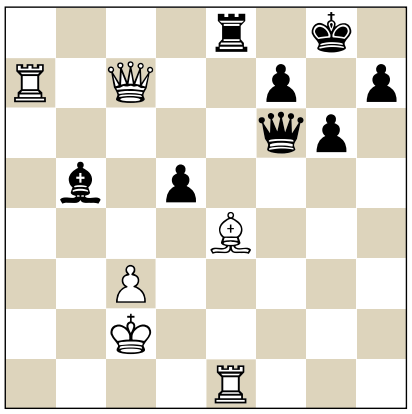
41...♖e8

A desperate pin on the e-file.

42.♖a7 During the game we both believed this to be very powerful. It turns out, though, that Black can still struggle on.

Right after he had lost the game, a visibly shocked Baadur mentioned 42.♕c5!? as a possible improvement that should have helped him to win the game. After 42...♗c4 he may have had the 43.♗xd5 trick in mind: 43...♖xe1? 44.♖a8+! ♔g7 45.♕f8+ ♔f6 46.♕xf7+, and White wins, but the clever 43...♕f5+ turns the tables.

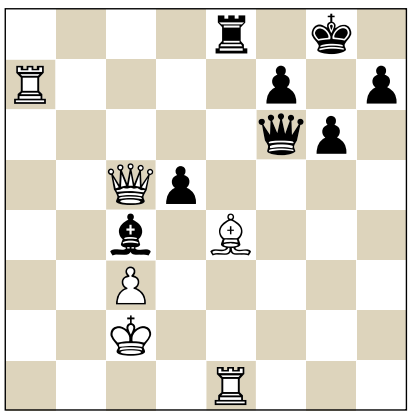
42...♕f6



The only move, but an efficient one. From here on in, Baadur started thinking hard, slowly consuming his huge lead in time.

43.♕c5 After 43.♗xd5 I have a pleasant choice, e.g. 43...♕f5+ 44.♔b2 ♕xd5 45.♖xe8+ ♗xe8, and the game should end in a draw.

43...♗c4



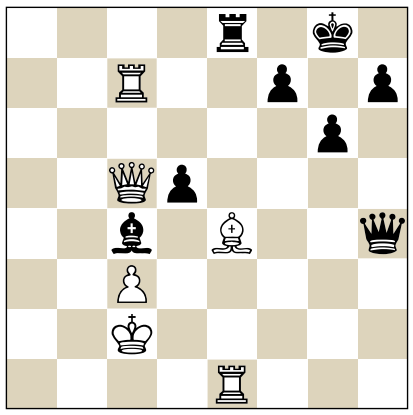
44.♖c7?

He just couldn't believe that the lethal shot of 44.♗xd5 that he had intended would fail to 44...♕f5+! 45.♔b2 ♖b8+! 46.♔a1 ♗xd5, and Black wins. So he burned up a lot of time and finally caught up with me on the clock.

I had seen 44.♗d3 ♗xd3+ 45.♔xd3 ♕f3+ 46.♔c2, when 46...♕g2+ would be safe for me and my team (46...♖xe1 is possible, but Black must be very careful, because 47.♖a8+ ♔g7 48.♕d4+ ♕f6 – 48...f6 is the correct winning move - 49.♖g8+ would lose the queen), since his last attempt to reject a draw by repetition with 47.♔b3? would cost him dearly on account of 47...♖b8+!.

44...♕h4! Obvious and strong. One of his rooks is attacked directly, the other one indirectly. His bishop is writhing in a pin, and the assault against his king resumes as it did a good 20 moves ago.

By now Stremavicius had drawn against Cheparinov and poor Baadur was in a must-win situation to save his team from defeat. Confronted with this unsolvable puzzle he reduced his remaining time to a few meagre minutes before committing his final error.



45.♗xd5? He had probably hoped to frighten me with 45.♖c8, but quickly realized how miserable his position remains after the cold-blooded 45...♖xc8 46.♕xc8+ ♔g7, when I am winning, despite the fact that I am still playing a rook down and one set of rooks has been swapped.

45...♕h2+ Now, however, he will get mated. **46.♔d1**

The last move of the game. After making it he saw the mate in two with 46...♖xe1+, groaned briefly, and sat there silently without pressing the clock. Finally, he slowly reached out his hand to me. We had beaten Georgia's best team 3-1.

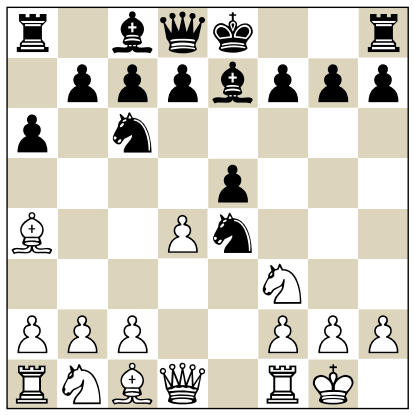
■ ■ ■

Azerbaijan had an excellent start and topped the table, shared with Poland and the US, after seven rounds. The final stretch was arduous and after losing three matches in a row, the Azeris dropped back to 15th place. In the early rounds, Shakhriyar Mamedyarov was scoring heavily. This is what he did to none other than Levon Aronian in Round 5.

NOTES BY
Jan Timman

Levon Aronian
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (5)
Ruy Lopez, Open Variation

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘xe4 6.d4 ♗e7



A surprising choice. Radjabov played this old system a few years back.

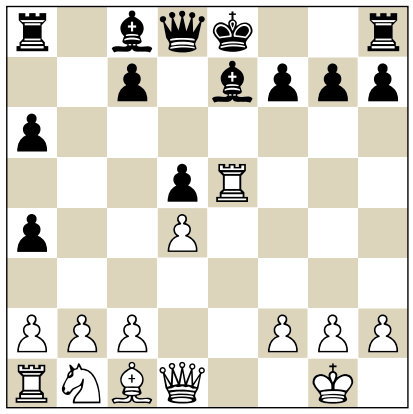
7.♖e1 b5 The modern approach introduced by Tarrasch, although he didn't fare well with it. The alternative from the 19th century(!) is 7...f5.

8.♖xe4

Black's idea becomes clear after 8.♗b3 d5 9.dxe5 ♗e6. Now we have an Open Ruy Lopez, in which White

has played his rook to e1: not the most testing move.

8...d5 9.♘xe5 ♘xe5 10.♖xe5 bxa4



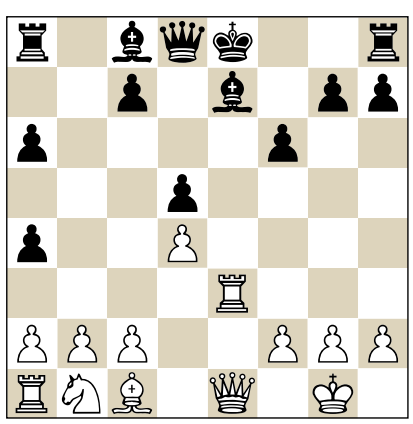
11.♕e1 In Lasker-Tarrasch, 2nd match game Berlin 1916, White played 11.♘c3 and won quickly after 11...♗e6?! 12.♕h5 g6 13.♕f3 ♗f6? 14.♖xd5!. Black should sac the d-pawn with 11...0-0, after which he will get enough compensation.

The text is new, but may be less accurate than 11.♕e2, as in Volokitin-Gerhardt, 2001. If Black then plays 11...f6 12.♖e3 c5, like Mamedyarov, White has 13.dxc5 ♔f7 (after 13...d4 14.♖g3 0-0 15.♗h6 White is better) 14.♘c3 ♗xc5 15.♖d3, and now:

– 15...♖e8 16.♗e3 (16.♕h5+ is also better for White) 16...♗xe3 17.♖xe3 ♖xe3 18.♕xe3 ♗f5 19.♖d1, with a positional edge.

– 15...♕e7 16.♕h5+ g6 17.♕xd5+ ♗e6 18.♕c6!, and Black doesn't get enough compensation. It would have been interesting to see what Mamedyarov had prepared against 11.♕e2.

11...f6 12.♖e3



12...c5!

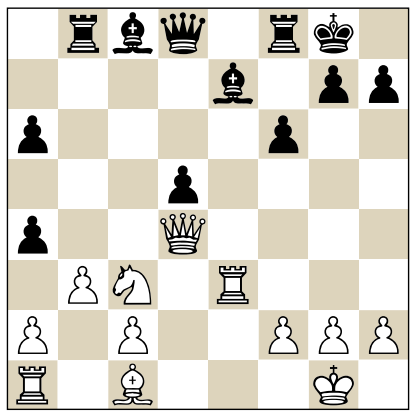
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov's brilliant attacking win against Levon Aronian was an instant classic.

This is the key move of Black's set-up. It is not easy for White to get any opening advantage now that the white queen is not very active.

13.♕d1 After an eight-minute think Aronian decides to return his queen to its original square. If 13.dxc5, Black can play 13...d4 14.♖e2 ♔f7, with a good game.

13...0-0 14.♘c3 ♖b8 The alternative was 14...a3. After 15.b3 cxd4 16.♕xd4 ♗b7 the game is level.

15.b3 cxd4 16.♕xd4



16...♗d6!?

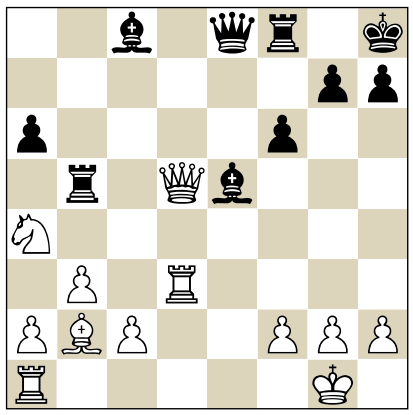
Mamedyarov starts an incredible adventure: he sacs two pawns, hoping to organize an attack against White's king. Objectively it is unsound, but his courage will be rewarded.

Black could have equalized with 16...axb3 17.axb3 ♗b7.

17.♕xd5+ ♔h8 18.♖d3 ♕e8 19.♗b2 ♗e5

After 19...a3 20.♕xd6 axb2 21.♖b1 ♗f5 22.♖e3 Black has insufficient compensation.

20.♘xa4 ♖b5



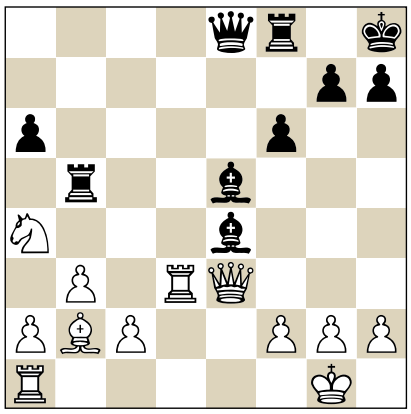
21.♕f3

Initially, the computer agrees with this queen move, but Mamedyarov has a hidden resource.

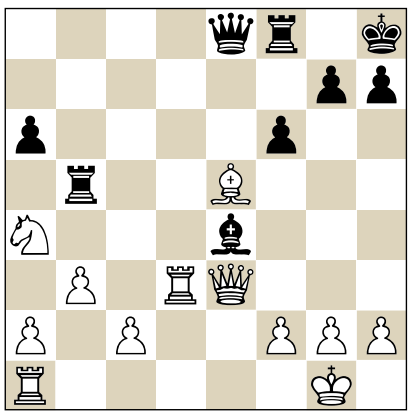
For this reason, the other queen move was better. After 21.♕c4! ♗e6 22.♕h4 ♗c7 23.g3 White consolidates his defence. Black would have enough compensation for one pawn, but not for two.

21...♗b7 22.♕e3 ♗e4!

Mamedyarov must have seen this fantastic move well in advance.

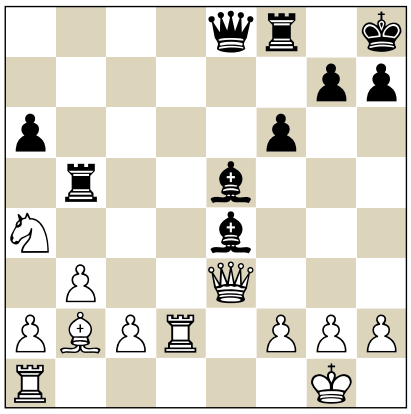


23.♖d2! The only move to keep an edge. The alternative was 23.♗xe5, when Black has two options:

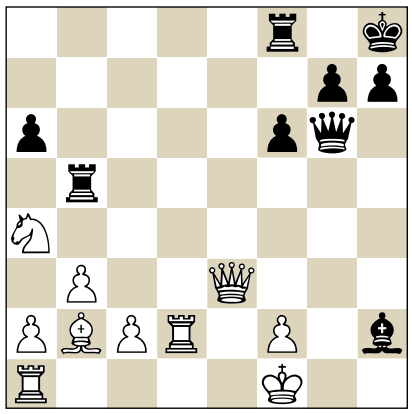


ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

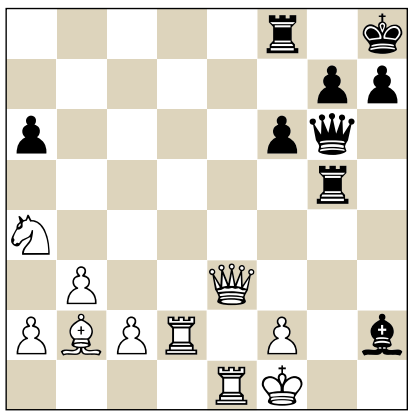
– 23...♖xe5! 24.f4 ♖e7 25.♖e1! ♖ff7! 26.♕xe4 ♖xe4 27.♖xe4 ♖e7, and the chances are equal.
– 23...♗xd3 24.♗d6 ♕xe3 25.fxe3 ♖d8 26.cxd3 ♖xd6 27.♖c1 ♖b8 28.♘c5, and White has winning chances. His knight is very powerful.



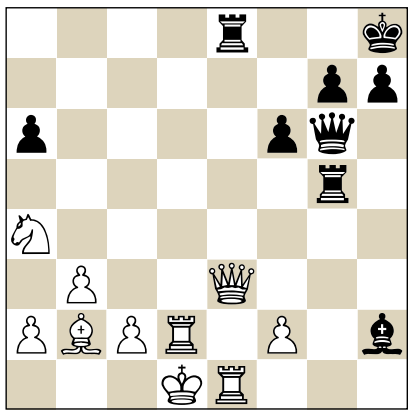
23...♗xg2! The second surprise.
24.♔xg2 If Aronian had foreseen what was coming, he would probably have opted for 24.f4!, forcing the exchange of queens. After 24...♗xb2 25.♕xe8 ♖xe8 26.♘xb2 ♗h3 27.♘c4, Black doesn't have full compensation.
24...♕g6+ 25.♔f1 ♗xh2



26.♖e1 Alternatives were:
– 26.♘c5 ♖e8 27.♕xe8+ ♕xe8 28.♘e6 ♕xe6 29.♖d8+ ♕g8 30.♖xg8+ ♔xg8 31.c4 ♖g5 32.♔e2 h5, with an equal endgame.
– 26.f4 ♗xf4 27.♕e7 ♖g8 28.♖d8, and the position is dynamically balanced.
26...♖g5

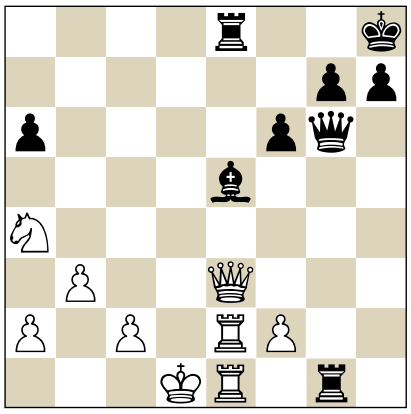


27.♔e2? Based on an oversight. White had two better moves:
– 27.♗a3 ♖g1+ 28.♔e2 ♕h5+ 29.f3 ♖e8 30.♗e7 ♖g5 31.♔d1 ♗g3 32.♖f1 ♖e5 33.♕g1 ♕h3!, and Black is better.
– 27.♘c3! ♕h5 28.f3 ♗g3 29.♖g2 ♗xe1 30.♖xg5 fxg5 31.♔xe1 ♖xf3 32.♕e5 ♖f8 33.♔d2, and this sharp position offers equal chances.
27...♖e8 28.♔d1

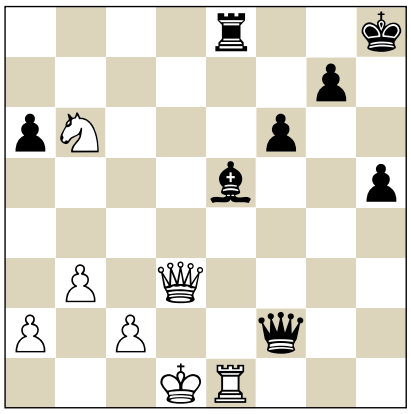


It looks as if White is winning, but...

28...♖g1! Mamedyarov's third masterstroke. Suddenly White can't avoid material losses.
29.♗e5
The only move to ward off immediate defeat.
29...♗xe5 30.♖de2



30...h5
A good move, but Black could have won instantly with 30...♖d8+ 31.♔c1, and now 31...♕f5!. This queen move is certainly not easy to see. White's only move is 32.♕e4, but after 32...♕g5+ 33.f4 ♕xf4+ Black has an easy win in the endgame.
31.♕d3
Probably the best defence. After 31.♘b2 ♖d8+ 32.♔c1 Black has the quiet move 32...♔h7, which should guarantee the win.
31...♕g2 32.♘b6 ♖xe1+ 33.♖xe1 ♕xf2



34.♘d5
White could have put a tougher defence with 34.♘c4, in which case 34...♕c5 is the best way to keep the White knight from d6, although Black will not find it easy to convert his extra pawn after 35.a4.
34...♖d8 35.c4 ♕xa2

continued on page 53

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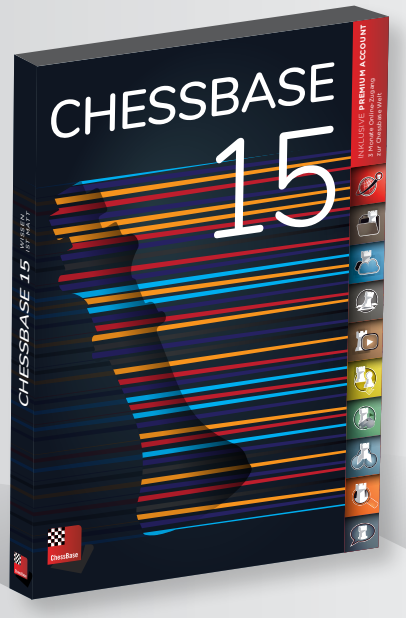

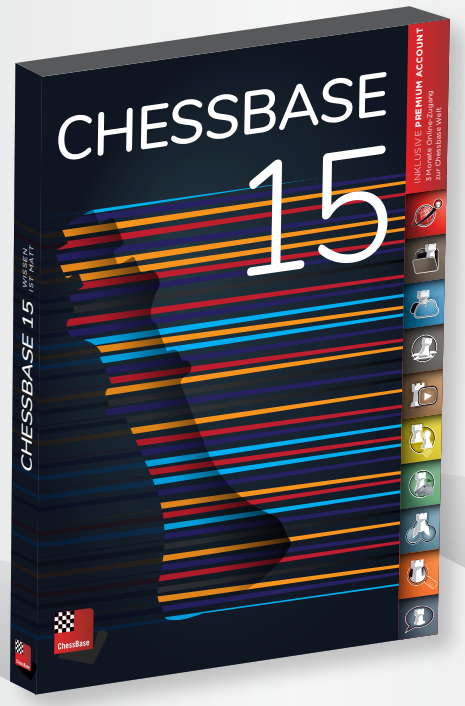

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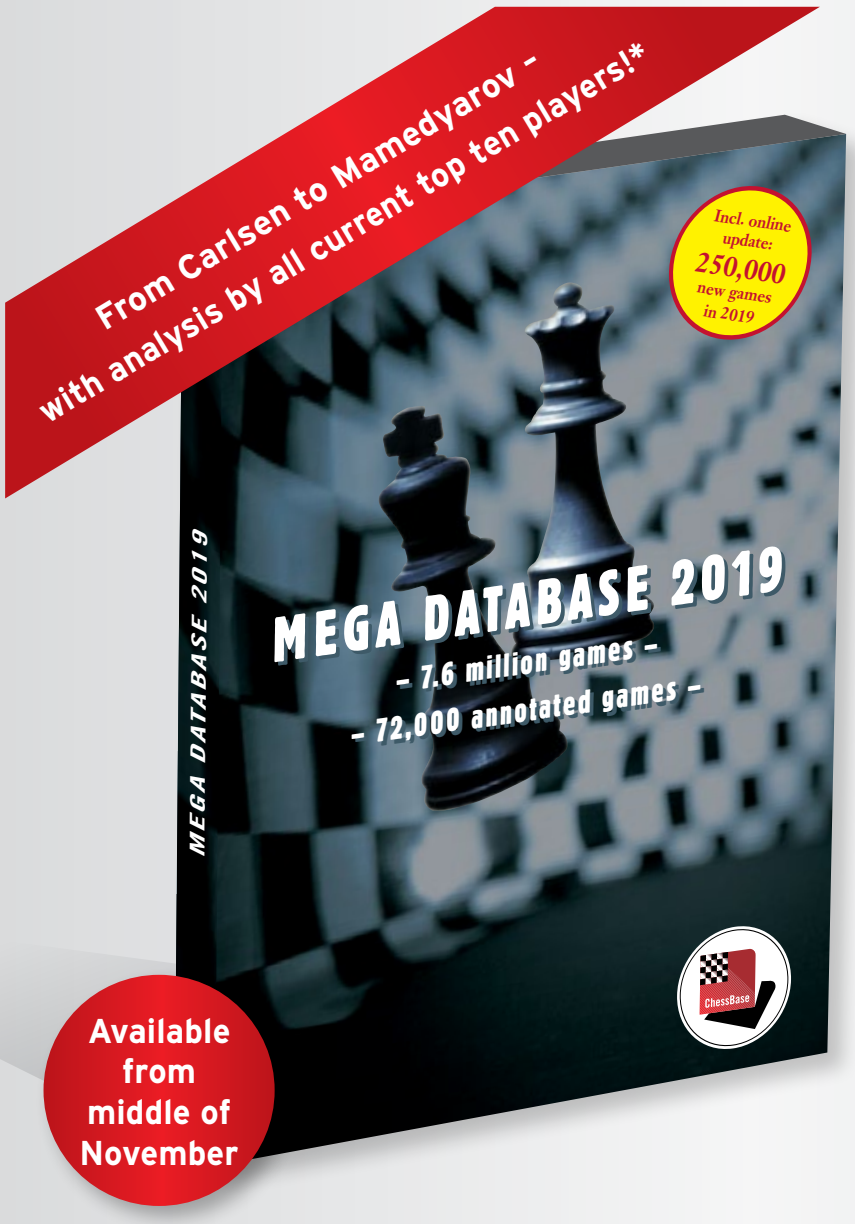

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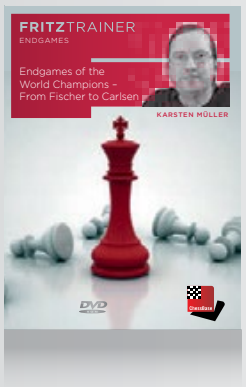

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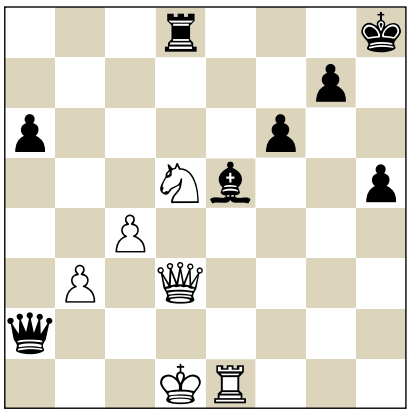
Errors excepted. Printed in October 2018.

continued from page 48



Now Black is two solid pawns up. The rest is easy.

36.♕f3 g6 37.♖e3

Or 37.♖xe5 ♕a1+, and Black wins.

37...♔g7 38.♕h3 ♕f2 39.♖d3 ♕g1+ 40.♔c2 ♕h2+ 41.♕xh2 ♗xh2 42.♖h3 ♗e5 43.♔d3 a5 44.♔e4 ♔f7 45.♔f3 ♖h8 46.♔g2 g5 47.♘e3 ♔e6 48.♔f1 f5

White resigned.

■ ■ ■

The Netherlands had an Olympiad they will hope to forget very soon. A final-round defeat against Mongolia even threw the 13th seed back to 40th place. The only player in good form was our contributing editor Anish Giri, who played all 11 rounds, collected 8½ points and won the bronze medal on Board 1. His comments to the following win are crisp and crystal-clear as always.

NOTES BY
Anish Giri

Anish Giri
Viorel Iordachescu
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (9)
Two Knights Defence

I had faced Viorel Iordachescu once before. In our previous game he had played brilliantly until I managed to turn things around at some point and eventually win the game. This time I was aiming for a calmer position.

1.e4

Curiously enough, 1.e4 was also how our previous game started. After 1...g6 2.d4 ♗g7, I decided to advance my c-pawn two steps, so we ended up in a King's Indian.

1...e5

In team events, everyone usually plays solidly against me.

2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 I guess most players aren't really ready to face 4.♘g5 here, but this didn't fit into my plans of playing a calm game.

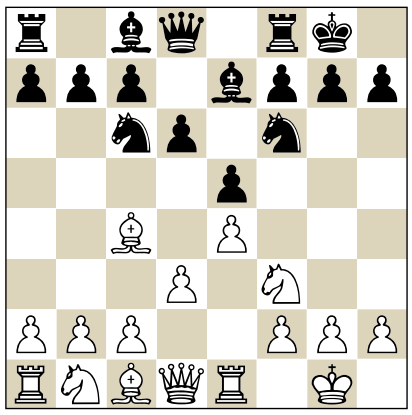
4.d3 ♗e7

This system is less fashionable than the traditional Italian, when Black develops the bishop more actively to c5. But it still has its merits.

5.0-0 0-0 6.♖e1

Magnus Carlsen played the cunning 6.♗b3 here against Bu Xiangzhi, but since I wasn't expecting this system, I didn't want to face a move like 6...d5 unprepared.

6...d6



Now Black is threatening to 'win' the bishop with ...♘a5, so White usually chooses between 7.a4, 7.c3 or the move that I opted for, which is a lot rarer.

7.a3 In 95 percent of the cases this move is going to be less useful than 7.a4, but I was ready to take the odds and, more importantly, wanted to try to slightly confuse my opponent.

7.c3 in fact transposes to a sub-line of the Spanish: 7...♘a5 8.♗b5 a6 9.♗a4 b5 10.♗c2 c5, when White has lost a tempo on ♗c4-♗b5, but gained one on ♗a4-♗c2 without a stop on b3.

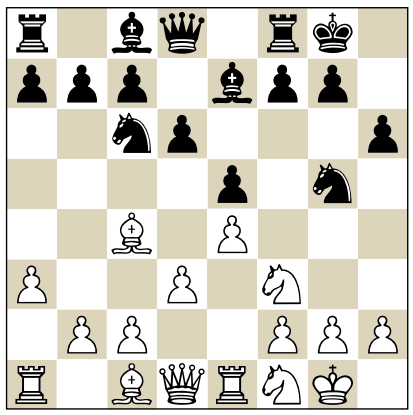
7...h6 Just like after 7.a4, Black can choose between a few tempting plans. ...♔h8, ...♘g8, ...f5 is a plan I used myself a couple of times; ...♘a5, ...c5 is similar to the Spanish Chigorin; simply offering the trade of the light-squared bishops with ...♗e6; and finally, perhaps the most creative one, the plan in the game.

8.♘bd2 I was wondering whether my opponent wanted to go for the ...♘h7 plan or for ...♖e8, ...♗f8, ...♗e6. In any case, the text-move seemed to be the most flexible move for White. ♘c3-♘d5 is also an option, but I didn't want to be too creative.

8...♘h7 9.♘f1

In my experience, when Black goes for some peculiar knight manoeuvre in a Spanish set-up, the best way to counter it is by just playing the most standard moves. I considered getting creative with a b4, ♗b2 set-up, but in the end, I saw potential for a small plus from the text.

9...♘g5



10.c3! I was proud of this standard move. ...♗g4 is not a real threat, while c3 is pretty much essential in these structures.

10.♘xg5 ♗xg5 11.♗xg5 ♕xg5 12.♖e3 is what I would have done 10 years ago, when I still saw the world through rose-coloured glasses. The rook lift looks appealing but is not going to accomplish much.

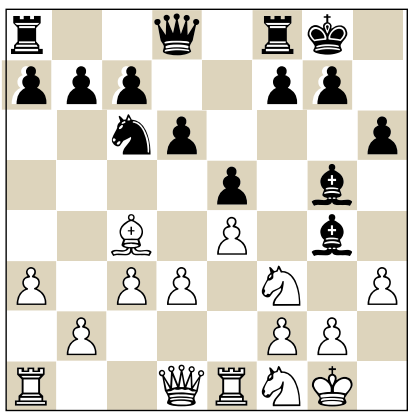
10...♗g4?!

My opponent happily grabs the bishop pair, which was also something I had originally been concerned about. But after thinking about the ensuing position for some time I realized that it would not solve Black's opening problems.

10...♘xf3+ 11.♕xf3 ♗g5 would have clarified the position. I would expect Black to follow up with ...♗e6,

when White has too little to claim an advantage, but enough to continue the game in the hope of outplaying his opponent. For example, White can try to carry out the d3-d4 push at an opportune moment.

11.♗xg5 ♗xg5 12.h3

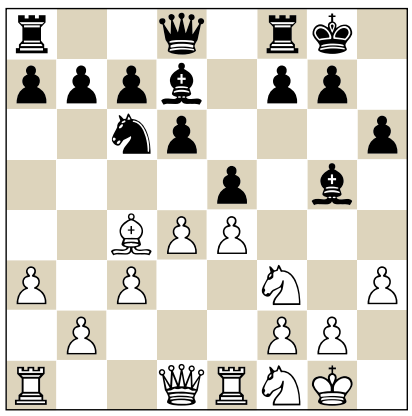


12...♗d7

Taking on f3 is worse, since White's control of the light squares is stronger than Black's control of the dark ones. The game move leads to an unpleasant position, too, so by elimination the best practical decision would have been to go 12...♗h5, and although the bishop would be out of play on g6, Black would have some play with ...♘e7, preparing ...c6-d5.

13.d4

I like my centre here, and the lack of the dark-squared bishop is not at all felt at the moment. White has easy moves to make now, including ♕d3, ♖ad1, perhaps throwing in b2-b4 somewhere, and choosing whether to place the knight on g3 or e3, the perennial Spanish dilemma.

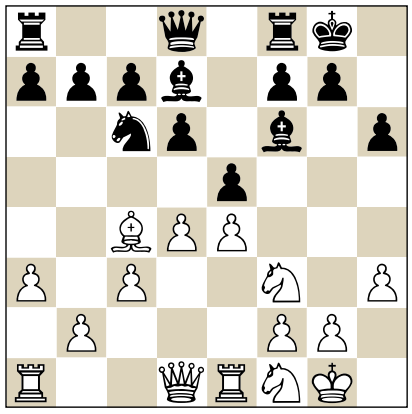


13...♗f6 In the game Black never managed to play ...g6, ...♗g7, so in hindsight this was not a good decision.

'Since some people see chess as a game of plans and not moves, my opponent tried to justify his play and landed in a horrible position.'

Better was 13...a5!?. After delving deeper into the position I came to the conclusion that the only thing that would slightly annoy me is if Black pushed ...a5-a4 and stop me from gaining space on the queenside. If I met ...a5 with a4, the black knight would enjoy the b4-square after the eventual ...exd4, cxd4.

13...g6 first would allow 14.♘xg5, when weakening the kingside with ...g6 seems rather uncalled for.



14.♕d2!?

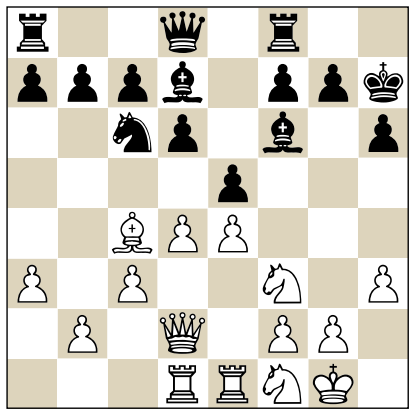
I was actually thinking that it might be more relevant to stop ...a5-a4 than to stop ...g6, but I sensed that my opponent had ...g6 quite high on his list of priorities, so I decided to be annoying and prevent it.

14...♔h7

I didn't believe ...g6 was such a great idea that it would be worth making this ugly move for. Again, I felt ...a5-a4 was the best attempt to create counterplay.

15.♖ad1

At first, 15.b4 feels more natural here, but when I realized that the 15...♘a5 and 16...♗a4 ideas were hitting empty air, this seemed more to the point.



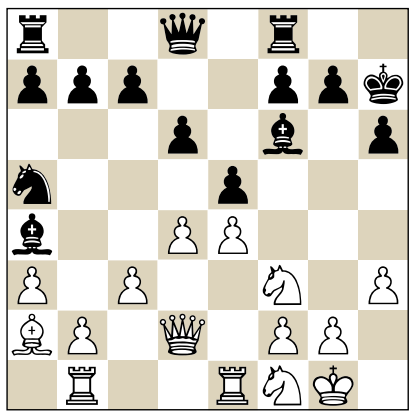
15...♘a5?

A tempting tempo move, but since there is clearly no follow-up, I don't know why my opponent decided to go for this.

15...g6 no longer seems attractive. After any move Black should reckon with dxe5!?, when he will have to recapture with a piece and watch out for f4, e5. White can also just play it slowly with ♘e3, b4, perhaps ♗d5 somewhere, adding to the pressure and asking Black if he really dares to go for ...f7-f5, which seems way too risky with such an unstable centre. Still, it would have been a much better move than the idea in the game.

16.♗a2 ♗a4 17.♖b1

Now b4 is a serious threat, and it turns out that all Black did with his last two moves was to misplace his pieces. I believe the best would be to go back all the way with ...♗d7/...♗e8 and ...♘c6, but since some people see chess as a game of plans and not moves, my opponent tried to justify his play and landed in a horrible position.



17...♗b3?

The bishop swap in itself is not such a terrible idea, but the black knight

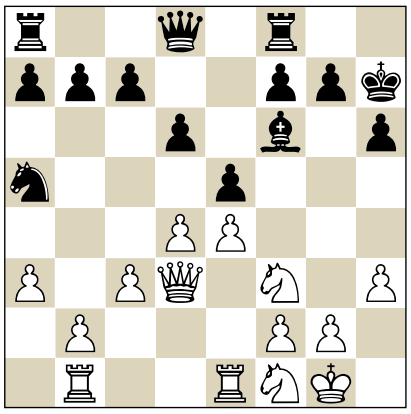
NEW IN CHESS

Playing all 11 rounds and scoring 6 wins with no losses, Anish Giri won bronze on Board 1 and rose to 5th place in the world rankings.

will no longer be able to go back to a normal square.

18.♗xb3 ♘xb3 19.♕d3 ♘a5

Trying to get the knight back into the game via c6, but as it turns out, even that wish is not going to be granted.



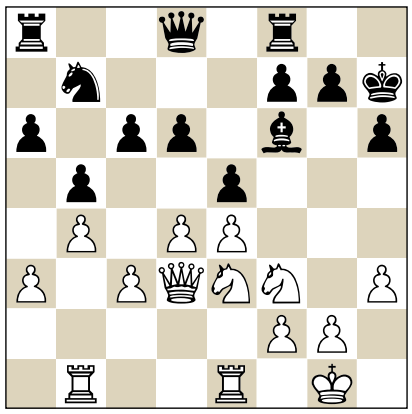
20.♕b5! I liked the look of this shuttle manoeuvre.

20...c6 20...b6 looked even worse.

21.♕d3 b5

21...c5 is particularly bad here, with the d5-square being so exposed. The easiest is to just trade with 22.dxc5 dxc5 23.♕e2 and penetrate the light squares with rooks and knights.

22.♘e3 a6 23.b4 ♘b7



Black has some kind of Breyer pawn structure, but without the essential light-squared bishop and with a terrible knight on b7. He is just lost here.

24.♖bd1! It is possible to play in standard fashion on the queenside and exert pressure with c4 or a4, but this is more brutal, as White is threatening to win the e5-pawn at some point with ♘g4 and potentially some dxe5 dxe5 ♕d7 ideas.

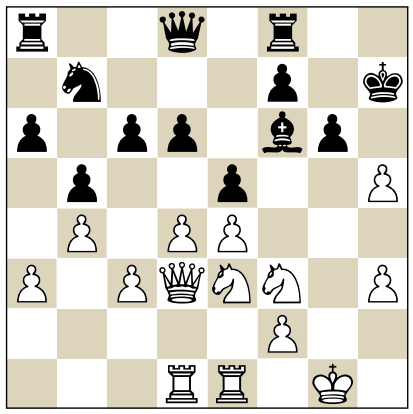
24...h5 Stopping ♘g4, but asking for the tempting reply:

25.g4!

When your opponent's knight is on b7, it is easy to be brave.

25...g6 There was no defence, but this only speeds things up.

26.gxh5

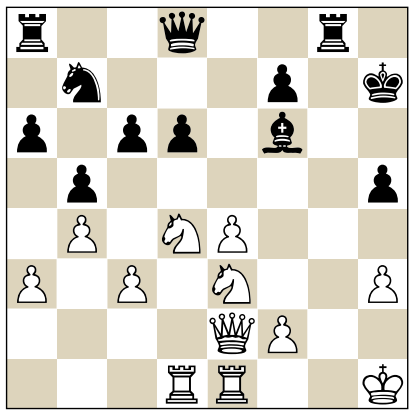


With the open g-file, the weak f5-square and the weak h5-pawn, Black is just going to get mated.

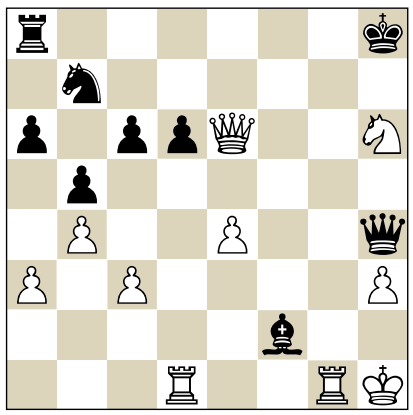
26...gxh5 27.♔h1 ♖g8 28.♕e2

Hinting that the collapse will happen on the h5-square.

28...exd4 29.♘xd4



29...♖g6 The h5-pawn could not be protected. **30.♕xh5+ ♖h6 31.♕xf7+ ♔h8 32.♘g4** White is winning anyway, but this is the most brutal. **32...♗xd4 33.♘xh6 ♕h4 34.♕e6 ♗xf2 35.♖g1**



And Black resigned, as he is getting mated. ■

SHORT

KINGMAKER

What a glorious ride this has been! Who would have imagined, at the beginning of 2018, that the twin tumours of chess, Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and Georgios Makropoulos, would both be removed from power? What an unheralded opportunity to remake things for the better! But, my goodness, what an enormous task that we have in front of us...

At the start of my FIDE presidential campaign I briefly entertained thoughts of outright victory. The reasoning was that if I could pick up the anti-establishment vote (at just over a third of the electorate in 2014), and the incumbents split right down the middle, then perhaps I could edge ahead. The slight flaw with this otherwise eminently plausible analysis was that I lacked the $5 million war chest that the previous challenger, Garry Kasparov, had in Tromsø. I knew I had no choice but to fight an insurgent offensive.

Those slender hopes of winning against two entrenched but ineffable mediocrities were essentially torpedoed when Arkady Dvorkovich entered the fray. Here was a highly accomplished man with serious credentials and money to boot. When the news of the new contender reached us in Leuven, Belgium, Anish Giri remarked, just as he was leaving the hotel, that this probably dealt a severe blow to my chances. He was right, of course, although I did not acknowledge it openly. What Anish could not know was that this also blew a big hole in my ticket with just days remaining before the deadline for submission. I had hoped to enlist the new president of the Qatar Chess Federation, grandmaster Mohammed Al-Modiahki, who had actually flown to the medieval Flemish city to finalise details. But when his wife, Zhu Chen, was offered a place on the Dvorkovich ticket, his Sports Ministry favoured a Russian alliance, and that was that.

Europe was always going to be a fiercely-contested region, and so I felt I needed someone experienced and combative alongside me. When Garry Kasparov, who advised me in the earlier part of the campaign, suggested Bachar Kouatly, I could see the logic. The President of the French Federation possesses many positive qualities, but I was well aware that he comes with the reputation of being a bit slippery. Bachar spoke to me several times about his numerous projects within France, which were supposedly his sole priority, and his lack of interest in, and ignorance of, modern FIDE politics. Nevertheless he vaguely promised to join me. However, when it came to giving a firm commitment, he was persistently evasive, which led me to surmise that he was not being entirely frank. Garry remained upbeat almost to the last, which shows that he is a far better strategist than a judge of character. In chess, one may decide to place the bishop powerfully on g7. In politics, the bishop may decide that it just does not want to move to that square. Bachar, to my disappointment, but not surprise, duly appeared as Deputy on Dvorkovich's team. Would it have hurt for him to tell me his plans straight? Given the almost desperate circumstances, I was very lucky to find two excellent replacements for my ticket – Lukasz Turlej, from Poland, and Panu Laine, from Finland – at extremely short notice.

By this time I had fallen back on plan B (which admittedly was always the most likely option) – securing enough votes to decisively influence the election. I didn't do much campaigning on the road beyond an eight-nation Africa tour, a trip to Dublin, a meeting of the Nordics, in Elsinore, and a jolly gathering in Amsterdam, kindly arranged by Bessel Kok. Dissemination of ideas was conducted through the cleanhands4fide campaign website and social media – especially Twitter. I didn't have money for jetting everywhere and, besides, time was running out. Most of the lobbying would inevitably have to be done in Batumi itself.

'As I had absolutely nothing in common with Makro, it made perfect sense to explore possibilities with Arkady Dvorkovich.'

Unless I desired to lose gracefully and ineffectually, ultimately I was going to have to negotiate with one or other of the two candidates. As I had absolutely nothing in common with Makro, it made perfect sense to explore possibilities with Arkady Dvorkovich. He had spoken about me positively in interviews (in stark contrast to Makro) and the urgent need for reform, which gave me

grounds to believe we could and would find common ground. Indirect channels of communication were opened, and it was agreed, on principle, that we should meet. Nevertheless many weeks passed before this happened, partly on logistical grounds (I was scheduled to play in Abu Dhabi for one thing) but partly because once again in my life, I failed to resist Garry Kasparov, who argued for building up support and leaving any discussions with other candidates up until as late as possible.

Even now I can hardly understand the logic of this plan, although it mirrored the indecision within the USCF, which is probably why it was advocated. I could barely conceive of any circumstances where I would want to enter a coalition with Makro, as I despise the man and everything he represents. Additionally, there was a serious risk that my voting base would be eroded in the remaining weeks, if the campaign just drifted. Indeed there was clear evidence it was already happening.

That said, I needed the support, or at least acquiescence, of Kasparov Chess Foundation (KCF) Africa – the largest sponsor of chess on the continent – which is why, for a while, I adopted a rudderless course in which I had no confidence. By then others on my ticket were becoming concerned and asking when the big meeting was going to take place. After two days of introspection, or perhaps depression, I finally took the decision to ignore Garry and meet Arkady in London. My spirits immediately rose.

The venue was the historic 19th century chess haunt of Simpsons-in-the-Strand. My companion was the Iraqi-born grandmaster and lawyer, William Watson. Arkady, whose son is at Marlborough School, in the UK, was alone. The conversation was cautious at first – talk about football; family; his time at Duke University in North Carolina etc. Eventually, after some hours' discussion of ideas, we came to the point. Arkady said he had begun the campaign late but was now gaining ground all the time. He said we had two choices: either to exchange information of mutual benefit – as we had already been doing on an ad hoc basis – or to go for a fully-fledged alliance. I said if we did the latter, Makro was probably sunk. Checkmate. He agreed.

We held a further, far more detailed meeting, in Helsinki, with in-depth electoral analysis, before heading to Georgia. Makro was still publicly claiming that he had 114 votes in his pocket, but we knew that was bovine excrement. He was behind. Curiously though, I am not sure he was aware of it. Many of his lieutenants definitely were not.

My team worked hard on lobbying in the Sheraton Hotel, where most of the delegates stayed, and at the playing hall. But it was not until I strolled over one evening, with Panu, to 'Justine' – a lavish restaurant/bar/pool where the Dvorkovich team was headquartered –

'After two days of introspection, or perhaps depression, I finally took the decision to ignore Garry and meet Arkady in London. My spirits immediately rose.'

that the situation visibly became clear. Players and delegates from all over the world were playing blitz, smiling, laughing and enjoying the generous hospitality. It felt like a victory party.

Two days before the election, Arkady estimated our combined total at 102 votes. Michael Khodorkovsky – the USCF Delegate – counted 103 votes. The following morning the cleanhands4fide team gathered in my suite. Originally I had intended to withdraw after the first round of voting, but by now I was inclining towards pulling out altogether. The big risk was that if I polled well – say 35 votes or so – Makropoulos could be ahead before the second ballot. Psychologically, that could be very dangerous. Removing him was our primary goal. After a frank discussion, we reached a consensus.

Arkady delivered a professional, presidential speech to the General Assembly, outlining his plans. I then savaged the culture and record of the Makro administration, before withdrawing and endorsing the Russian former Deputy Prime Minister. Makro, angry and wrong-footed, lashed out at the man who had just quit. It was a poor speech by any standards, but the bully could not help himself. Our team adjourned to Justine where we began celebrating long before the result was announced. Emil Sutovsky was the messenger bearing the great news – Dvorkovich 103, Makropoulos 78. The tyranny was over.

Nigel Short

Summer of

Tatev Abrahamyan and communications coordinator Kiley Herndon in front of the World Chess Hall of Fame. 'We still have hopes that one day "Pop Culture Hour with Kiley and Tatev" will be part of the official broadcast.'

AUSTIN FÜLLER

In another month packed with chess, the Saint Louis Chess Club hosted the last two stops of the Grand Chess Tour. For many the Club has become a second home and this certainly goes for **TATEV ABRAHAMYAN,** who this year alone has already spent around three months there. That's why we asked her not only to share her impressions of these two GCT legs, but also to allow our readers a peek behind the scenes of the most active chess club in the world.

The term 'Summer of Chess' was coined by the Saint Louis Chess Club last year to commemorate a series of elite events from June to August. The second year of the 'Summer of Chess' concluded with the last two stops of the Grand Chess Tour (GCT): The Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz and the Sinquefield Cup. The nine tour participants were joined by wild-cards Leinier Dominguez in the Rapid and Blitz and Magnus Carlsen in the Sinquefield Cup.

The GCT introduced a new format this year with a final in London in December, where the top four players will battle it out for a $300,000 prize fund in a knockout style tournament that will feature classical, rapid, and blitz chess. From qualification spots on the line to the highly anticipated encounter between Carlsen and Caruana, not to mention the combined prize fund of $450,000, August in St. Louis was teed up to be a sparkling finale to a summer of nonstop top tier chess.

In the chess world, St. Louis has

Chess

Chess around the clock in St. Louis' Central West End

earned the reputation of being a glamorous hotspot for the elite. To me, this mid-western town has become my second home. I say this with no exaggeration, as this year alone I've already spent around three months there. I first set foot in the Saint Louis Chess Club in 2009 when I was invited to play in the US Women's Championship. Since then, I have been a frequent guest of the club in different capacities. The first and only time I ever did commentary for the GCT was during Norway Chess in 2015, when I was asked to replace Jennifer Shahade for a day. I was nervous to say the least, but eventually decided it would be a worthwhile experience. I even convinced my good friend Alejandro Ramirez to drive me to the mall to get a manicure and buy a new blazer to look nice on camera. I don't think I slept the night before, and I'm not quite sure how I got through the day. It also happened to be the longest round, which didn't help my cause. One of many challenges I faced was making sure I didn't stop mid-sentence when the director, Tom, gave directions into my ear piece. It's difficult to do coherent commentary when your voice is shaky and someone is talking in your ear! Later in the year, I was hired by the club to run the Grand Chess Tour social media accounts for the London Chess Classic, and these days my duties are mostly along that vein. I interact with online followers, write recaps for each day of the tournament, and do some game analysis as well. It is busy work, but not nearly as stressful as being in front of the camera!

Until now, I've been assuming most people have been to this Midwestern chess capital. For those of you who haven't yet made a trip to St. Louis, allow me to set the scene for you.

The Chess Club

The club itself is a three-story building located in a neighbourhood called the Central West End. The first floor is for casual play, where newcomers will be greeted by a friendly staff. There is a large selection of books and merchandise to stock up on. Apart from the many boards inside the club, one can catch a casual game on the marble chess tables outside the club, which are available for the use of members and non-members alike. The rumour is that it isn't an unpopular date night option in the neighbourhood! The top floor is the main tournament hall. By now, every chess fan has had a glimpse of the playing hall from the coverage that the club provides. The walls are covered with photos ranging from the local players to World Champions. The high-end tourna-

AUSTIN FÜLLER

Beth Deeken and Ryan Chester, just two of the many friendly faces who may welcome you to the Saint Louis Chess Club.

ments take place in the boardroom on the top floor, which is further away from the staircase and has its own small kitchen and bathroom. It is more isolated and has a more exclusive feel to it.

Across Maryland Avenue from the chess club is the Hall of Fame. It is pretty impossible to miss, with the world's largest chess piece in front as well as a giant chessboard sitting outside of it. Passers by taking selfies with the giant king or kids giggling while moving the giant pieces are a common sight. The Hall of Fame is one of the most beautiful and elegant buildings I have ever seen. It houses chess memorabilia and spectacular exhibitions ranging from exclusive photos of Bobby Fischer to 16th century chess sets and everything else chess related in between.

Two blocks down Maryland Ave is the Chase Park Plaza, an upscale hotel where the players stay during tournaments. Just beneath that, across a major boulevard called Kingshighway, is Forest Park – a large park with a zoo, several museums, a theatre, and excellent trails for running and biking. The park offers a superb refuge for players looking to unwind after a long day or even to get some exercise. The neighbourhood also has coffee shops, grocery stores, and boasts countless restaurants with cuisines all across the spectrum. All of these perks help make my long stays away from home quite homey.

Speaking of homey, the chess club owns four houses on the same street. They are used to host event workers, players in some of their smaller tournaments, and an occasional VIP guest. The original house has been around for as long as I can remember, but the other three are newer additions. Many of us spend so much time there that we leave part of our belongings behind. Yasser Seirawan has a full closet of dress shirts and suits in one, whereas I have my priorities right and have stocked up on food.

While I tried to paint a thorough picture of the club and the surrounding neighbourhood, there is one part of the club I purposefully left out until now: The basement. It is largely unavailable to the public, yet it is easily the busiest floor of the building. It is also where I spend the majority of my time when I'm on duty. It houses two studios: A large one for the English commentary, and a slightly smaller one that is currently used for Russian commentary. There is a kitchen that has a fridge loaded with soft drinks and fizzy water, tea and coffee pots, and seemingly endless trays of food that go in and out. In between those three sections is the main room, which has two long tables, typically cluttered with laptops and papers. During events, I'll park myself at a free space and get to work with my laptop. Next to me are other club workers as well as some of the production crew. This awesome bunch is as integral to the shows as the commentators themselves, yet they go largely unnoticed.

'Yasser Seirawan has a full closet of dress shirts and suits in one of the houses.'

Another person who makes the long hours in the basement more enjoyable is a brilliant young woman named Kiley Herndon, the communications coordinator. To be honest, I don't even know if she knows how to play chess. She has allegedly taken one lesson, but there is no evidence of it. I will never stop being amazed by her capacity to learn about chess and chess players – a completely foreign subject to her. I can't forget the time when she turned to me and asked: 'Why is someone messaging me on the club's Facebook account asking why no one plays the English? Didn't someone play it yesterday?', leaving me in complete awe of her attention to detail. She is also my escape from the nonstop chess coverage: Our discussions range from her dog, to politics, to the latest celebrity gossip. We still have hopes that one day 'Pop Culture Hour with Kiley and Tatev' will be part of the official broadcast.

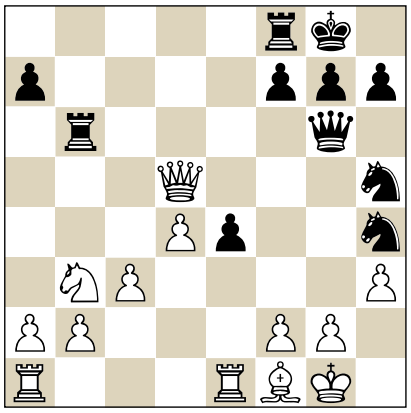
The tournaments

Now, back to the events! I arrived a day early to settle in, do grocery shopping, and get in 'event mode'. I usually get the house of choice all to myself, but this time I had a housemate – Mike Klein of Chess.com. Our cohabitation was very successful, mainly due to the morning cup of coffee I woke up to and the compliments I received on my cooking. It was quite lovely to have someone to discuss the events of the day with as we both worked on our reports, often with a backdrop of Fabiano Caruana, Rustam Kasimdzhanov, Alejandro Ramirez, Maxime Vachier-Lagrave and sometimes Levon Aronian playing bughouse next to us! With the exception of Shakhriyar Mamedyarov, who made his debut in St. Louis, the Central West End is by now a familiar stomping ground for many of the players.

The events kicked off with a glamorous opening ceremony at the Hall of Fame that was closed to the public. After the pairings were set, the day ended in a dinner with Rex Sinquefield for the players and commentators – another staple of life in St. Louis.

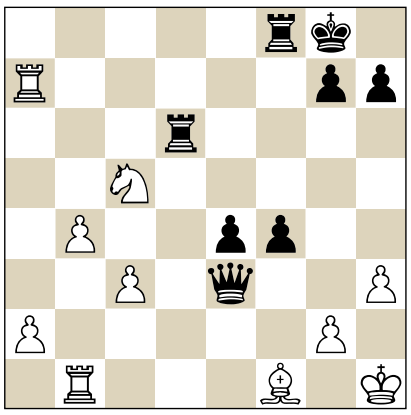
The rapid and blitz events of the GCT are divided into 5 days: 3 days of rapid and 2 days of blitz. Day one of the Saint Louis Rapid and Blitz was all about Fabiano Caruana. After a poor showing in the first two legs of the GCT, the American ended the day with a perfect score. His countryman and GCT leader Wesley So had a forgettable day, scoring ½/3.

Levon Aronian
Fabiano Caruana
St. Louis rapid 2018 (2)



position after 23.♕xd5

Black has a crushing attack as the white king is very lonely.
23...♘f3+ 24.♔h1 ♘g3+
24...♕g3 looks glamorous, but sadly doesn't work: 25.gxf3 ♕xf3+ 26.♗g2.
25.fxg3 ♕xg3 26.♕e5 Since 26.gxf3 runs into 26...♖g6, with mate.
26...♘xe5 27.dxe5 ♕xe5 28.♖ad1 f5 29.♖d7 ♖d6 30.♖xa7 ♕g3 31.♖b1 f4 32.♘c5 ♕e3 33.b4

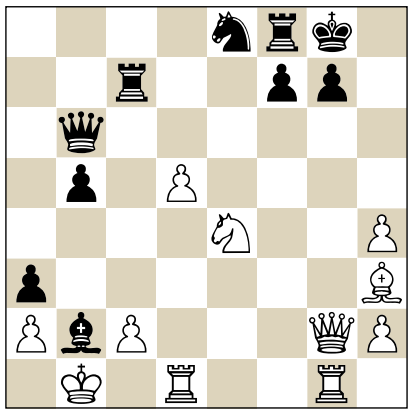


33...f3 34.♖e7 fxg2+ 35.♗xg2 ♖h6 0-1.

The second day brought a lot of draws, allowing Caruana to take the lead ahead of Vachier-Lagrave, Nakamura, Mamedyarov and Karjakin.

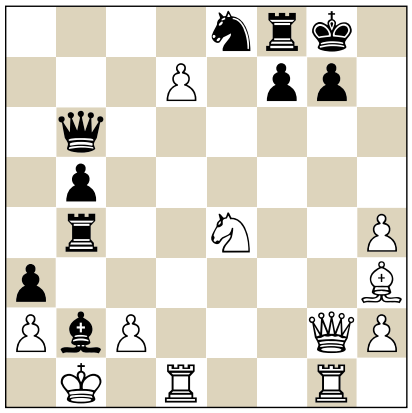
There were still a few spectacular games! Like this one:

Levon Aronian
Hikaru Nakamura
St. Louis rapid 2018 (6)

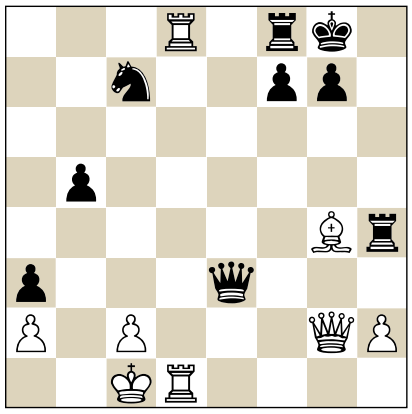


position after 28...♗xb2

A complicated Najdorf has boiled down to this position, which White is winning.
29.d6
Aronian simply marches his pawn up the board.
29...♖c4 30.d7??
But at the critical moment of the game he errs.
Here, White had a miraculous save in 30.c3!!. Without the ...♖b4 idea for Black, the white d-pawn will win the game: 30...♖xe4 31.d7, and because the bishop on b2 is blocked, the e8-knight cannot move due to the mate on g7.
30...♖b4



But now White's king is in a mating net.
31.♖d3 After 31.dxe8♕ ♗e5+ 32.♔c1 ♖xe8 the knight is hanging: 33.♘d2 ♖b1+!! 34.♔xb1 (or 34.♘xb1 ♗b2+ 35.♔d2 ♕d4 mate) 34...♕d4, mating And after 31.d8♕ ♗d4+ 32.♔c1 ♕xd8 takes care of business.
31...♗f6+ 32.♔c1 32.♖b3 ♖xe4 doesn't help either. **32...♖xe4 33.♖gd1 ♖xh4 34.♗g4 ♘c7 35.d8♕ ♗xd8 36.♖xd8 ♕e3+**



37.♔b1 Since 37.♕d2 would run into 37...♕xd2+ 38.♖8xd2 ♖xg4.
37...♕c3 Now Black's win is just a matter of time.
38.♖xf8+ ♔xf8 39.♖d8+ ♘e8 40.♖xe8+ ♔xe8 41.♕e4+ ♔f8 42.♕a8+ ♔e7 43.♕e4+ ♔d6

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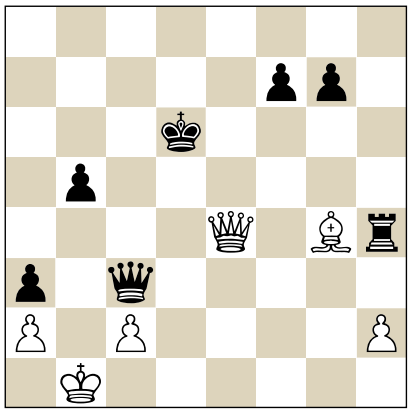
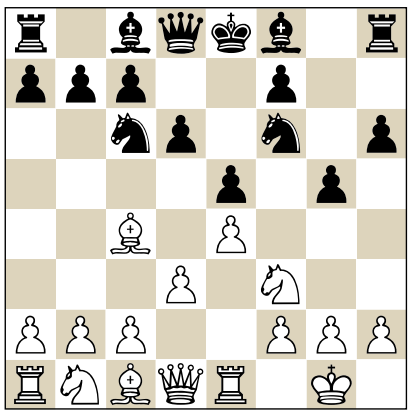


44.♕f4+ ♕e5 45.♕b4+ ♔c6 46.♕xa3 ♖xg4 47.♕a6+ ♔d7 48.♕b7+ ♔d8 White resigned.

Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
St. Louis rapid 2018 (6)
Two Knights Defence

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♘f6 4.d3 h6 5.0-0 d6 6.♖e1 g5



This move is not advisable in classical chess. But then this is rapid.

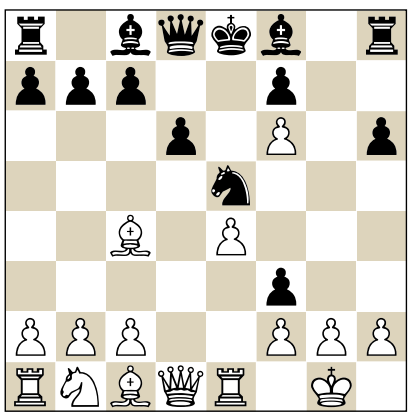
7.d4

Vachier-Lagrave immediately reacts incorrectly.

7...g4 Leading to a more or less forced sequence.

8.dxe5 White has to go for this or else part ways with his d4-pawn.

8...gxf3 9.exf6 ♘e5



The attack along the g-file will be devastating for White.

10.♘d2 ♕xf6 11.gxf3

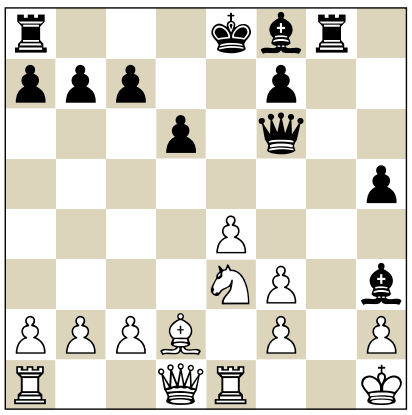
It's hard to suggest a better move for White. Black will take on g2 anyway, followed by ...♖g8.

11...♖g8+ 12.♔h1 ♘xc4 13.♘xc4 ♗h3 14.♘e3 h5

With the simple idea of ...♗h6 to remove the defender on e3.

15.♗d2

15.♖g1 ♖xg1+ 16.♔xg1 0-0-0 only delays the inevitable.



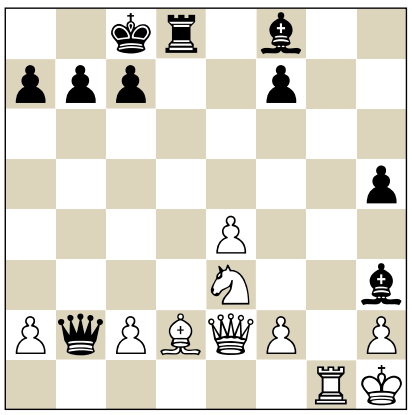
15...0-0-0

The alternative was 15...♗h6 16.♗c3 ♕g6 17.♖g1 ♗xe3 18.♖xg6 ♖xg6, and Black will win the material back and then some.

16.♕e2 d5 17.♖g1

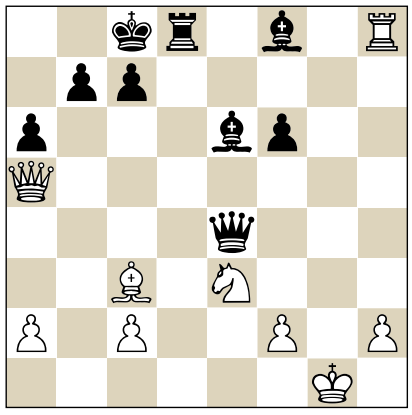
As 17.exd5 ♗d6, followed by ...♕e5 or ...♕f4, will devastate White.

17...♖xg1+ 18.♖xg1 dxe4 19.fxe4 ♕xb2



Switching gears and collecting the queenside pawns. Black has the bishop pair, so the white king will never be safe.

20.♕xh5 ♗e6 21.♖g8 f6 22.♖h8 ♕d4 23.♕a5 ♕xe4+ 24.♔g1 a6 25.♗c3

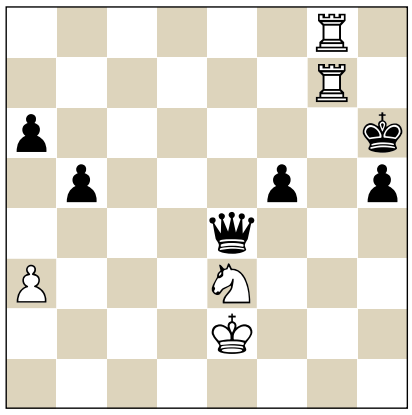


25...♗d5 25...♖d1+ was unnecessary, but who doesn't like a nice sacrifice(?): 26.♘xd1 ♕g4+ 27.♔h1 (27.♔f1 ♗c4+ 28.♔e1 ♕e2 mate) 27...♕xd1+ 28.♔g2 ♗d5+ 29.♔g3 ♕g1+ 30.♔h3 ♗e6 mate.

26.♘xd5 ♖xd5 27.♖xf8+ ♔d7 28.♖f7+ ♔e8 29.♖e7+ ♔xe7 30.♕xc7+ ♖d7 31.♕c5+ ♔f7 32.♕h5+ ♕g6+ 33.♕xg6+ ♔xg6 34.♗b4 ♖c7 35.c3 b6 0-1.

The walls came crashing down for Caruana when he turned a winning game into a loss after forgetting his knight was pinned and blundering a rook. Hikaru and Shakhriyar both scored 2½/3, thus taking the lead.

Fabiano Caruana
Leinier Dominguez
St. Louis rapid 2018 (7)



position after 53...♕e4

White has reached a winning position and plays what looks like a winning move. ..

54.♖e7 But... **54...♕xe7** and now 55.♘xf5+ is impossible because of the pin. A heart-breaking loss for Fabiano, who had played an otherwise excellent game.

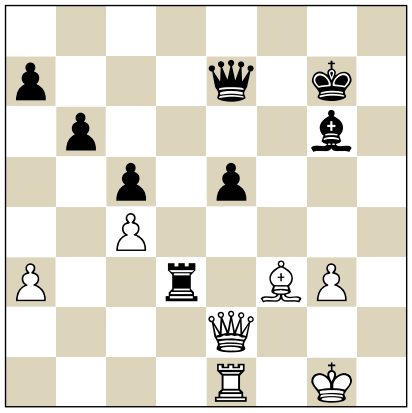
The blitz days are the most fun, because you never know what will happen. In a classical tournament, one bad day means one loss. In a blitz tournament, one bad day can ruin the tournament entirely. For Vachier-Lagrave, it was the opposite. He dominated on that day, scoring 6/9, but his losses on the last day of the rapid put him behind Nakamura and Mamedyarov.

The turning point for Hikaru was in Round 8, when Shakhriyar blundered a rook in a much better position. Shakh banged the table in frustration after his opponent snatched the rook, then apologized immediately and resigned the game. With a win over Anand in the last round, he finished the day tied for first with Hikaru, while Fabiano remained 1½ points behind.

LENNART OOTES

Hikaru Nakamura and his girlfriend Maria celebrate his win in the St. Louis Rapid & Blitz, his first major victory on American soil besides the US Championships he won.

Hikaru Nakamura
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
St. Louis blitz 2018 (8)



position after 37.♕e2

Now 37...♕g5 would end the game in a few moves, but Black had a blind spot.
37...e4?? The rook goes from being defended by the bishop to being in a pin. **38.♕xd3** 1-0.

St. Louis Rapid & Blitz 2018

1	Hikaru Nakamura	13
2	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	10
3	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	8
4	Fabiano Caruana	7
5	Levon Aronian	6
6	Sergey Karjakin	5
7	Leinier Dominguez	4
8	Alexander Grischuk	3
9	Wesley So	2
10	Vishy Anand	1

In the final day of blitz, Nakamura and Mamedyarov kept leapfrogging each other. Once again the crucial game was the penultimate match between the rivals. With a clutch victory, Nakamura won the tournament with a round to spare. Besides the US Championships, it is his first major victory on American soil. Maxime had another phenomenal showing and actually finished second after defeating Hikaru in the last round. And so, in what seemed like the blink of an eye, another successful tournament was in the books.

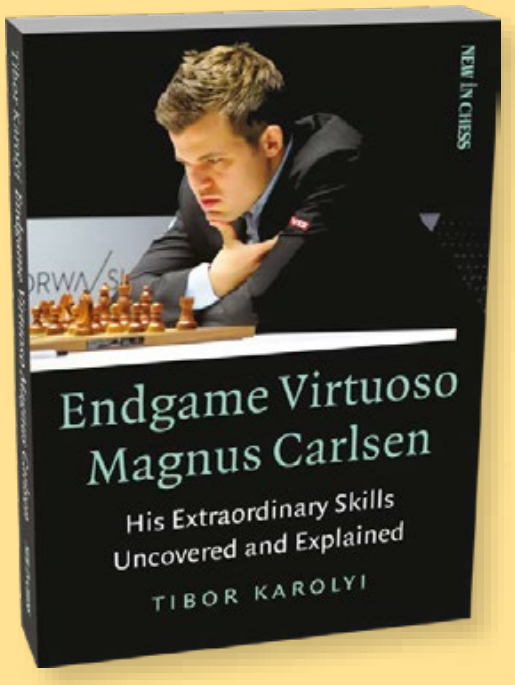
The most elite event

The Sinquefield Cup has a different kind of aura around it. Named after the founder of the chess club, it is the most elite and high pressure event in St. Louis. The tournament kicked off with an autograph session open to the public, located at the Kingside Diner right next to the club. The session included not only the players, but also the authors of the Sinquefield Cup 5-year Anniversary book, including yours truly. It is joyous to see starry-eyed children collecting the autographs of their heroes.

Then, it was on to another opening ceremony at the Hall of Fame. The pairings were already set during the drawing of lots for the Rapid and Blitz; the players were to face off with the reverse colours. There was a lot at stake in the form of GCT points, money, and qualification to the GCT finals in London. The highlight of the event, however, was going to be the encounter between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana in Round 7. The 6th edition of the Sinquefield Cup was a hotly contested event: half of the field was tied for first place until Round 5. Levon Aronian and Shakhriyar Mamedyarov drew first blood by defeating Sergey Karjakin and Wesley So respectively in Round 1. Interestingly enough, the decisive result between Mamedyarov and So was their only one of the event, as they went on to draw the rest of their games.

Vachier-Lagrave and Anand were actually one step ahead of them: They drew all of their games from start to finish! The two early leaders were joined by Magnus Carlsen, Alexander Grischuk and Fabiano Caruana. They all would remain in a tie for first until Round 6, when Caruana separated himself from the pack by defeating the struggling Sergey Karjakin.

How does he do it?



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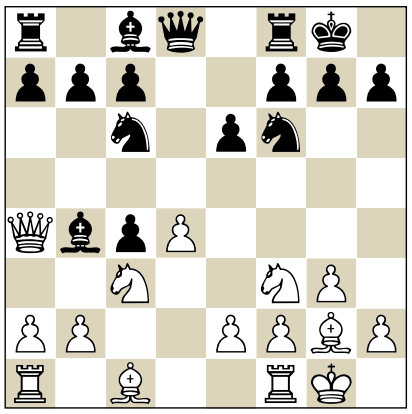
NOTES BY
Alejandro Ramirez

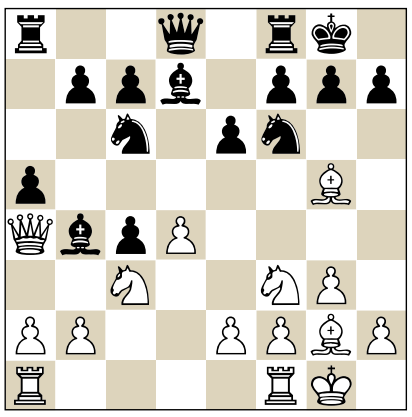
Fabiano Caruana
Sergey Karjakin
St. Louis 2018 (6)
Nimzo-Indian Defence, Romanishin Variation

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.g3 0-0 5.♗g2 d5 6.♘f3 dxc4 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♕a4



A relatively rare move in this line of the Nimzo-Indian. So had played it, quite unsuccessfully, against Anand in the Saint Louis Rapid & Blitz nine days before this game. Perhaps Kasimdzhanov had seen this game and spotted some potential.

8...♗d7 9.♗g5 9.♕c2 ♗e7 10.e4 ♘b4 11.♕e2 ♘d3 was most unconvincing in the aforementioned blitz game. **9...a5**



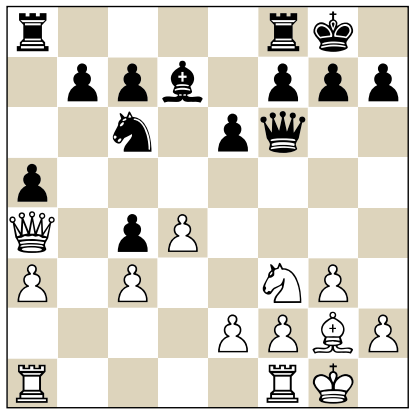
Played after a bit of a think. Clearly Karjakin was already in unfamiliar territory. 9...a5 is a logical move, because it defends the bishop on b4 and gains some space; but it also has some specific problems.

10.♗xf6! After 10.♖fd1 ♘xd4 11.♖xd4 ♗xc3? (11...♗xa4 12.♖xd8 ♖fxd8 13.♘xa4 h6 is complicated, but Black should be fine) 12.♖xd7 ♕xd7 13.♕xd7 ♘xd7 14.bxc3 the structure was much better for White in Lenderman-Gretarsson, Iceland 2018.

10...♕xf6 11.a3 ♗xc3

11...♗d6 12.♕xc4 is most unappealing. With the bishop on g2, achieving ...e5 is a difficult task for Black. Even invading on b3 solves nothing, for example: 12...a4 13.e3 ♘a5 14.♕e2 ♘b3 15.♖ad1, with a slight advantage for White.

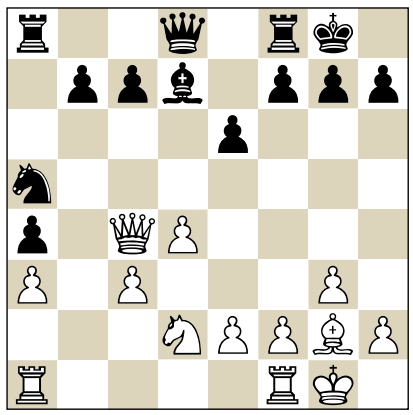
12.bxc3?!



Turning on the engine, which you should do as rarely as possible when going through a game, shows only a slight advantage for White, but it suggests some strange moves. Stockfish recommends 12...♖ac8, which is as weird a move as you can imagine, although I get that c7 might need to be defended in some lines. These positions in which one side has logical moves and the other, despite a good position, is struggling to find a plan, are very dangerous.

12...♕d8 Black's best way of playing was 12...♖fd8 13.♕xc4 a4!, fixing the a3-pawn, followed by ...♕e7.

13.♕xc4 a4 14.♘d2 ♘a5

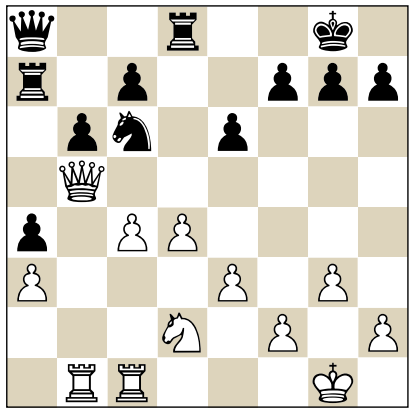


The start of an awkward plan.

15.♕b4 ♖a7 16.♖ab1 b6 17.e3 ♗c6 18.♗xc6 ♘xc6 19.♕b5 ♕a8 20.c4

Black's pieces do not look good, even though his structure is still quite solid.

20...♖d8 21.♖fc1

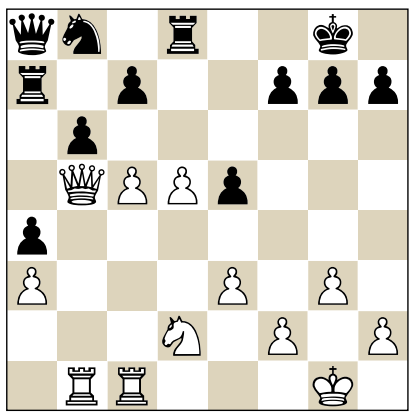


21...e5?!

Sometimes in chess it is hard to not do anything, but it is the correct thing to do here.

21...h6 would challenge Caruana to find a plan to break through. Expanding on the kingside seems logical, but is not so easy to execute: 22.h4 ♘e7 23.♕h5 c5!.

22.d5 ♘b8 23.c5!



Karjakin had possibly underestimated this move when he went for this line. Suddenly there is no way to keep the structure's integrity.

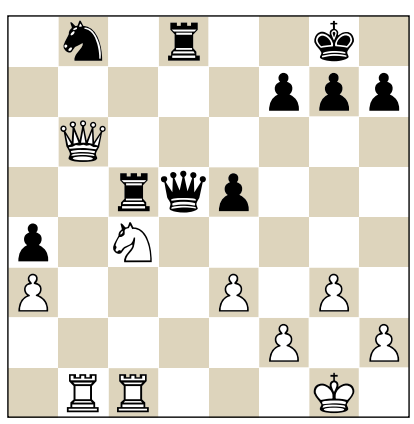
23...♖a5

23...♕xd5 24.cxb6 ♕xb5 25.bxa7 will leave White up a lot of material in the very near future. And 23...bxc5 24.♖xc5 ♘d7 25.♖c6 is clearly better for White.

24.♕b2 ♕xd5

After 24...♖xc5 25.♖xc5 bxc5 26.♕xe5 White is also winning.

25.cxb6 cxb6 26.♘c4 ♖c5 27.♕xb6



There are tactical problems with Black's pawns, something that often happens when the position opens up and you have a knight on b8 and have neglected to defend against back rank threats.

27...f6?

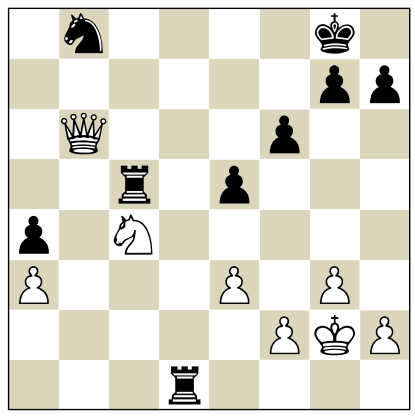
This loses in more than one way.

The best Black could attain was 27...♖f8 28.♕xb8 ♖xc4 29.♖xc4 ♕xc4 30.♕xe5 and trying to defend an endgame a pawn down.

28.♖d1 ♕xd1+ 29.♖xd1 ♖xd1+ 30.♔g2

LENNART OOTES

Fabiano Caruana and Sergey Karjakin join Alejandro Ramirez and Tatev Abrahamyan, as they follow the games in the basement of the St. Louis Chess Club.



Black can't defend his pieces and resigned.

And finally, the eventful day had arrived: Fabiano and Magnus were to face off one final time before their match. There was an overwhelming media presence, so much so that the spectators were not allowed in the playing hall for the first fifteen minutes: HBO, ESPN, Sports Illustrated, and the legendary photographer Harry Benson (who thinks Magnus looks like a movie star). Apart from the spectators, even the chess media was behind the rope waiting for the start of the game. The camera clicks started going off as the

two shook hands, and didn't seem to stop going off until they shook hands at the game's conclusion. The players seemed uncomfortable with the attention, but one would argue that the excessive media coverage was excellent for chess overall. The game itself was a topsy-turvy affair. To sum it up, Magnus was able to achieve a winning edge, but failed to finish the job, as Judit Polgar explains in her column in this issue.

Shush gesture

By now, Magnus' visit to the confessional booth during his game against Fabiano to make the 'shush' gesture, when he believed he was winning, has made its rounds on the Internet.

When a player enters the confessional booth, it gets really quiet as everyone wants to make sure to hear their thoughts. It goes without saying that no one was expecting this and it caused quite a stir on social media. Later, when asked about it by Yasser Seirawan, Magnus laughed it off and agreed that it clearly backfired. The players were later asked about it and most of them thought it was humorous. Grischuk even supported the gesture but suggested he do it in a completely winning position next time.

The storm passed as quickly as it came. It was back to usual business at the club without the insanity of the previous day. Peaceful results occurred on all boards, allowing Fabiano to enter the last round half a point ahead of Aronian, Carlsen, Grischuk and Mamedyarov. The game between Fabiano and Wesley ended in a relatively quick draw, but fireworks were still in store for the eager viewers.

The shush gesture that Magnus Carlsen made in the confessional booth became a bit awkward when he failed to win his game against Fabiano Caruana.

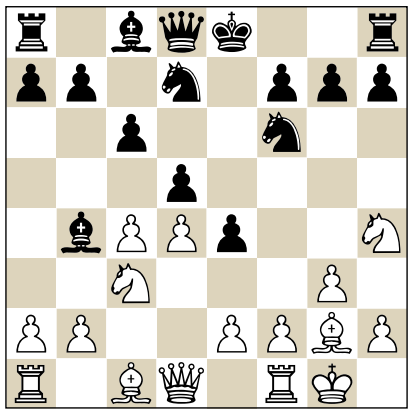
NOTES BY
Alejandro Ramirez

Levon Aronian
Alexander Grischuk
St. Louis 2018 (9)
Queen's Pawn Opening

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 d6

After Grischuk's 1.f4 against So it was not a surprise to anyone that he came out guns blazing, trying to steer the game away from well-known paths. He is known to essay the King's Indian once in a while, but that is not what he had in mind this time.

3.g3 ♘bd7 4.♗g2 e5 5.c4 c6 6.♘c3 e4 7.♘h4 d5 8.0-0 ♗b4

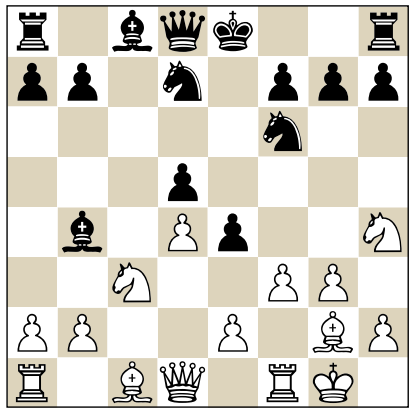


Both players were quite unfamiliar with the position by now, consuming large amounts of time in the opening, but Grischuk considerably more so than Aronian. The position is already full of subtleties.

9.cxd5

It is unlikely that there are variations in which Black wants to take the pawn on c4. However, it is one less thing that Aronian has to worry about in an already complicated position, not to mention that the knight on d7 is already committed, so opening up the c6-square is not a problem. Sometimes, the practical approach is the most effective one.

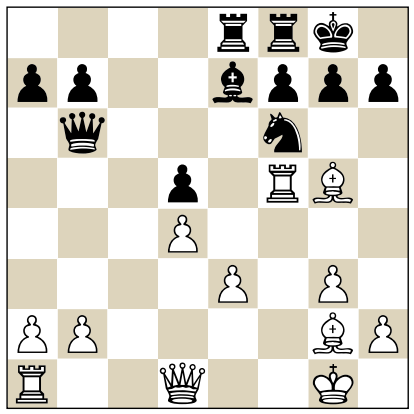
9...cxd5 10.f3



10...♗xc3

Played after a long think.

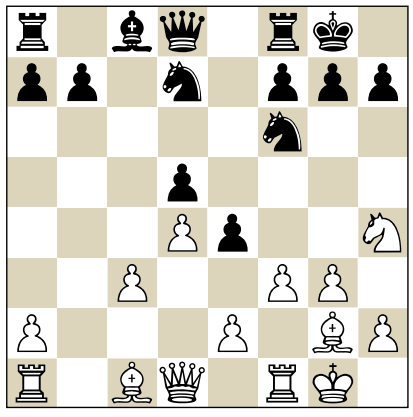
10...0-0 11.fxe4 ♗xc3 12.e5!? is not easy to evaluate, for example: 12...♗b4 13.exf6 ♘xf6 14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♘f5 ♗xf5 16.♖xf5, and it looks as if the bishop pair is quite dangerous. But perhaps after 16...♕b6 17.e3 ♖ae8!?



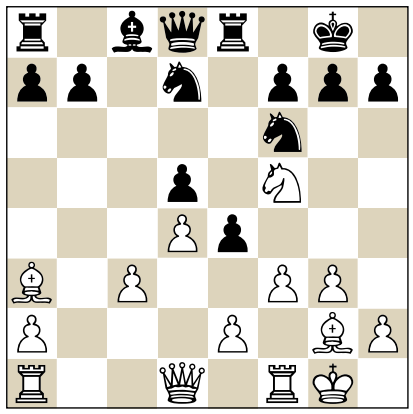
Black has enough counterplay due to the targets on the e-file, b2 and the possibilities to exchange the dark-squared bishop.

The other alternative was 10...exf3, and all of White's choices of recapturing on f3 have their pros and cons (except for the e-pawn – that one is just dumb), a problem for Grischuk, since he is known for examining every detail in his opponent's alternatives.

11.bxc3 0-0



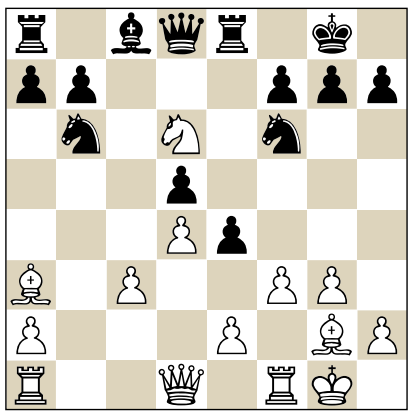
12.♗a3
12.fxe4 ♘xe4 13.c4 ♖e8! is a mess, but Black's tactical chances mean that White has to play with great precision.
12.c4 exf3 (in case of 12...♖e8, 13.c5! starts to become strategically dangerous for Black, since he is playing against the bishop pair and his knights have not found great squares yet) 13.♗xf3 (13.♘xf3!?) 13...dxc4 14.e4, with clear compensation for the pawn. To determine whether it will be enough will require a lot of analysis.
12...♖e8 13.♘f5



13...♘b6 The best time to capture on f3, 13...exf3, was now, since taking with a piece allows an opportune knight jump to e4. However, Grischuk has a different plan, which is also good. After the capture play can continue 14.exf3 ♘b6 15.♘d6, and now 15...♖e6 16.♘xc8 ♘xc8! (16...♖xc8 17.♗h3 ♖xc3 18.♗b2, and Black's compensation for the lost exchange is insufficient) 17.♕c2 leads to unclear play, and 15...♖e3 16.♕d2 is also unclear.
14.♖xf3, and now, as said, 14...♘e4 is better for Black.
14.♘d6

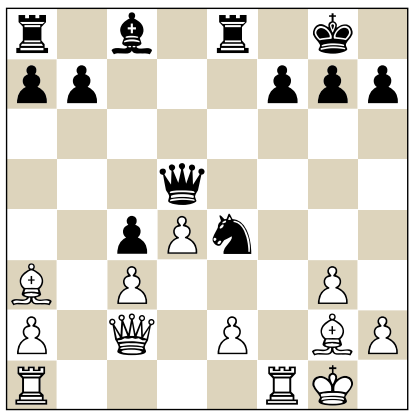
LENNART OOTES

The last-round encounter between Levon Aronian and Alexander Grischuk will long be remembered for the 'gangster move' that brought the Armenian a lovely win.



14...♘c4!
In case of 14...♖e6 15.fxe4! (15.♘xc8 ♕xc8 – 15...♘xc8!? might already be better for Black if that knight returns to c4 successfully – 16.♗h3 ♕xc3 17.♗xe6 ♕xa3 18.♗h3 ♕e3+ 19.♔h1 looks like good compensation for Black) 15...dxe4 16.c4! ♖xd6 17.♗xd6 ♘xc4 18.♗f4, and this version might be OK for Black, but White does have the exchange and still has the bishop pair. The light-square blockade will have to hold for Black in this variation, but it's a bit tenuous.
15.♘xc4
15.♘xe8 ♕xe8 16.♗c1 e3 is not something a human would seriously consider.

15...dxc4 16.fxe4 ♘xe4 17.♕c2 ♕d5

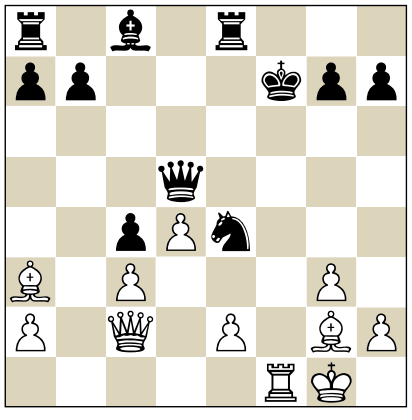


18.♖xf7!
This move is not necessary, but it definitely adds a new spin to the game! The move was described perfectly by Fabiano Caruana as a 'gangster' move, but for the sake of truth I must reveal to the world that Fabi just stole the term off of Rustam Kasimdzhanov, his second. The move is even more powerful when you look at the time difference: Grischuk had just a few minutes left by this point. These were the alternatives:
18.♖f4 ♗f5 is already dangerous strategically for White. 18.♖f3 ♗f5

19.♖af1 ♗g6 20.♖e3 f5 21.♖f4 is a very unhuman-like way to play, but the computer insists it is OK.

18...♔xf7 18...♕xf7 19.♗xe4 ♗h3 is very far from being clear: 20.♗xh7+? (20.♗d6! h6 is unclear) 20...♔h8 21.♗e4 ♕e6 is almost losing for White.

19.♖f1+

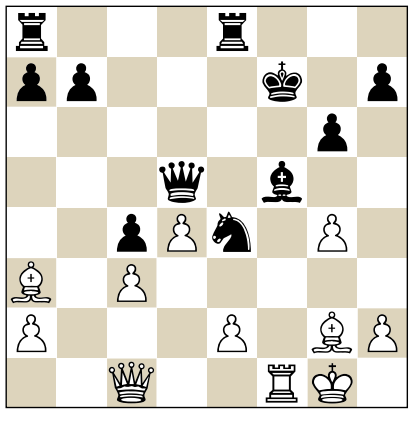


19...♗f5

19...♔g8 20.♗xe4, with mate on f8, is the obvious point. 19...♔g6 20.♖f4 ♗f5 21.g4 is only helping White.

20.g4 g6 White will regain a piece for his troubles, but the game doesn't really revolve around that anymore. If Black's king finds safety, the enduring light-squared blockade gives Black an easy win. Aronian must set his opponent as many problems as possible.

21.♕c1

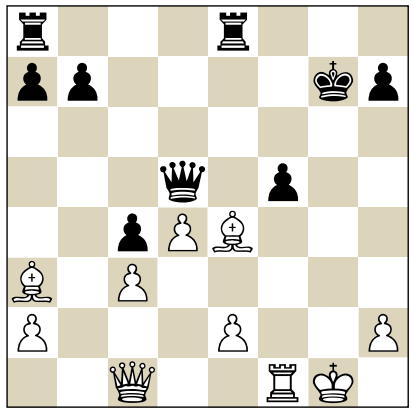


In a correspondence game Black would win every time from this position, but Grischuk is always playing blitz by move 15, and his clock was really ticking.

21...♔g7?!

Better was 21...♖e6! 22.♕h6 ♔g8 23.gxf5 gxf5 24.♕h3 ♖f6, when White's initiative is dying down, and everything is defended.

22.gxf5 gxf5 23.♗xe4



23...fxe4

'Magnus felt quite strongly about what he perceived to be an unfair rule and insisted on sharing the title.'

Richard Forster / Michael Negele / Raj Tischbierek (eds.)

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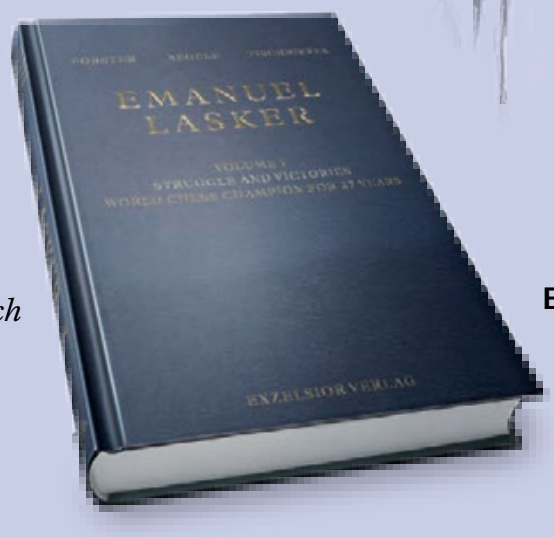

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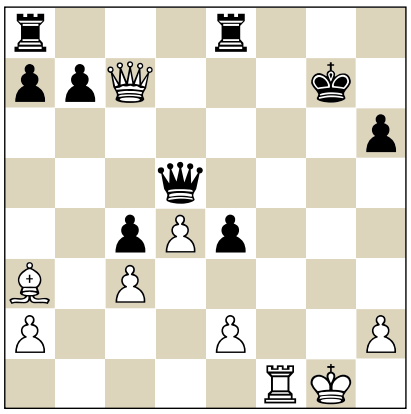
23...♕xe4 24.♕g5+ ♔h8 25.♕f6+ ♔g8 is just a perpetual after 26.♖xf5 (26.♖f3 f4! 27.♖xf4 ♕g6+ 28.♕xg6+ hxg6; 26.♖f2 ♖e6, and Black wins) 26...♕g4+ 27.♔h1 ♕e4+ 28.♔g1, but who is going to see all of that in 30 seconds? Besides, Grischuk was surely still playing for the win (28.♖f3?! ♖e6 gives Black an edge)!

24.♕f4 h6! 25.♕c7+



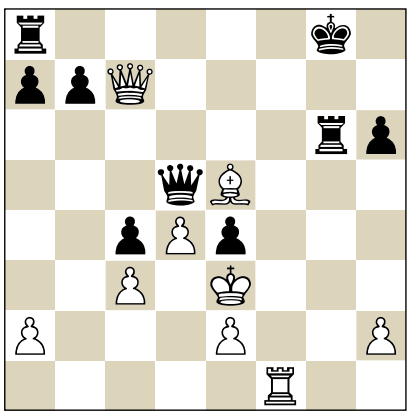
Aronian keeps giving Grischuk decisions to make, and it is so difficult to make some of them.

25...♔h8 This one is a bit strange, since the bishop always lands on e5 with check. Moving to g6 seemed more logical: 25...♔g6!. The king runs to the safe square of h5! For example: 26.♔f2 ♖ad8 27.♖g1+ ♔h5 28.♔e3! ♕f5!, and it is surprising how safe the kings are on e3 and h5. The position remains a mess.

26.♗d6 ♖g8+ 27.♔f2

Grischuk perhaps did not realize how safe the king was on e3.

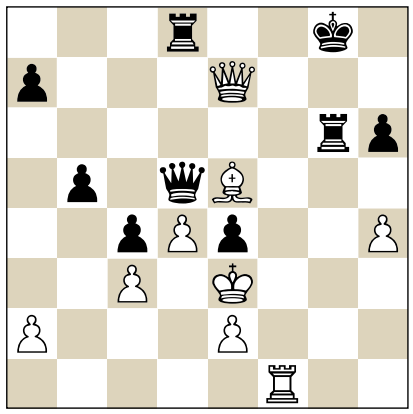
27...♖g6 28.♗e5+ ♔g8 29.♔e3!



29...♖d8?? Grischuk managed to get to this position playing with seconds, but the streak ends here. This move blunders away the game.

After 29...♖f8 30.♕e7! ♕d8 31.♖xf8+ ♕xf8 32.♕xb7 is very dangerous for Black. But 29...b5! is a computer move that no one will think of in this time situation, when, after 30.♕e7, Black has 30...♕e6!, and it should be a draw.

30.♕e7 Now Black is completely paralysed. **30...b5 31.h4**



The threat of 32.h5 is as simple as it is devastating.

31...a5 32.h5 ♖g5 33.♖f6 ♖xe5 34.♖g6+

Black resigned.

Albeit dubious, Aronian's 'gangster rook sacrifice' will forever be part of Sinquefield Cup history. Mamedyarov, on the other hand, didn't get any chances with the black pieces against Anand. Ultimately, however, it was Magnus' turn to show his mettle as he defeated Nakamura. How that went Magnus' second Peter Heine Nielsen explains at the end of this article.

And thus, Carlsen, Caruana and Aronian tied for first place. According to the tiebreak rules, one of the players had to be eliminated randomly by a drawing of lots. Magnus immediately took a dislike to the idea, and insisted on either a three-way tiebreak or sharing of the title. Fabiano already had a tiebreak match scheduled against Wesley for the final spot in London and had decided to exclude himself from the Sinquefield Cup tiebreak. Magnus felt quite strongly about what he perceived to be an unfair rule and insisted on sharing the title. The players agreed, and with the blessing of GCT arbiter David Sedgwick, three champions were crowned.

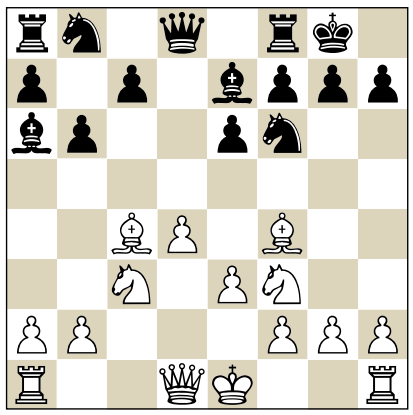
NOTES BY
Peter Heine Nielsen

Magnus Carlsen
Hikaru Nakamura
St. Louis 2018 (9)
Queen's Gambit, Blackburne Variation

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.c4 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 b6

A surprise. Nakamura favoured 6...♘bd7 until the Moscow Candidates Tournament in 2016, when he adopted 6...c5. In this game, he gives Black's third alternative a go.

7.♗d3 dxc4 8.♗xc4 ♗a6!?

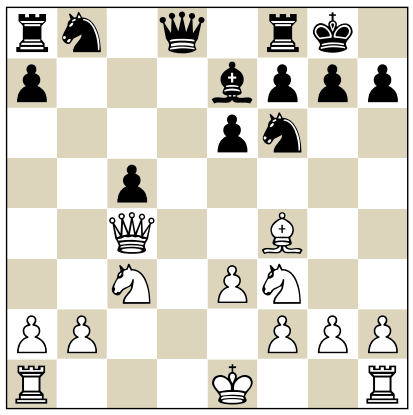


This has been a popular move of late, although I would very much like to criticise it on general grounds. Why try to swap pieces and leave the c6-square weak when you can put the bishop on the beautiful long diagonal (b7) instead? But the text was actually introduced by Magnus himself against Ding in Wijk aan Zee 2015, where it led to an uneventful draw.

9.♕e2 ♗xc4!?

Magnus played 9...♕c8, but Nakamura tries a more active approach.

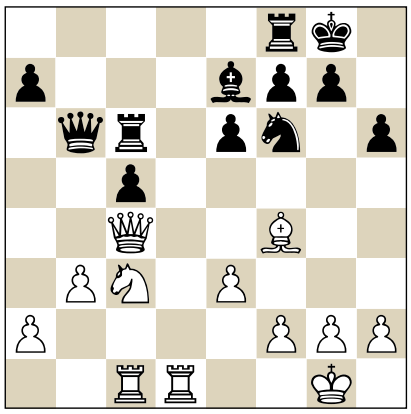
10.♕xc4 c5 11.dxc5 bxc5!?



An interesting and principled decision. Instead of accepting that he is slightly worse in a symmetrical position, Black makes a bold statement: Sure, I do have an isolated pawn and give you the c4-square, but my position is so robust that this is of no significance. Nakamura's statement is to some extent backed up by how the game unfolded.

12.0-0 ♘c6 13.♖ac1 ♖c8 14.♘e5 ♕b6 15.♘xc6 15.♘a4 ♕b7 16.♘xc6 ♕xc6 17.♗g5, followed by 18.♗xf6, would lead to a typical position very much in the spirit of this line. White will claim a strategic edge, while Black will claim that it is not relevant!

15...♖xc6 16.b3 h6 17.♖fd1

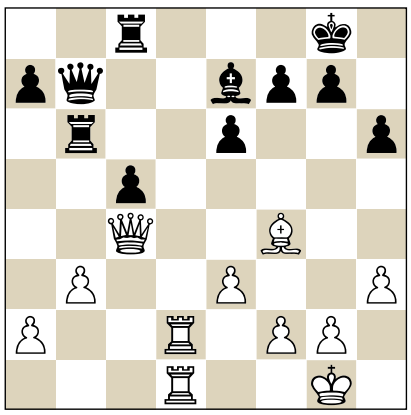


17...♕b7 Also interesting was 17...♕a6. While any endgame will be better for White in principle because of his better structure, Black in all likelihood will manage to force through ...c4 and equalize.

18.h3 ♖fc8 19.♘a4 ♘d7?!

Overly cautious. Over-protecting the c5-pawn is unnecessary, so using the more active d5-square for the knight (on its way to b6) would be far better.

20.♖d2 ♘b6 21.♘xb6 ♖xb6 22.♖cd1

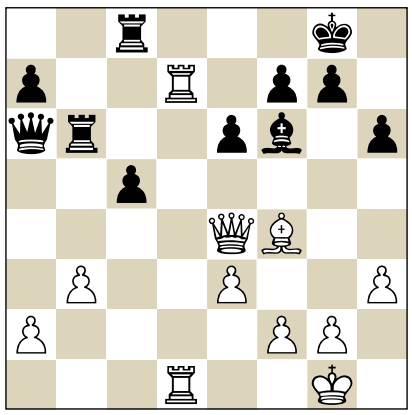


Rex and Jeanne Sinquefield with the Sinquefield Cup and the three winners of the 2018 edition: Fabiano Caruana, Magnus Carlsen and Levon Aronian.

Very tempting; launching a blitz attack along the d-file. But since Black seems to have sufficient defensive resources, the more positional 22.♗e5!? might have been a better way to try and maintain long-term pressure.

22...♗f6 23.♖d7 ♕a6 24.♕e4

Playing for an attack. If 24.♕c2 c4, Black starts liquidating his only weakness and equalizes.



24...e5!?

At first sight, this looks like a tactical blunder, but in reality it is just a well-calculated sequence, as 24...♕xa2!? 25.♗e5 ♖b4! 26.♕f3 ♗xe5 27.♕xf7+ ♔h7 28.♕xe6 ♖f8! 29.♕xe5 ♕xf2+, with a drawish position, would have been.

25.♗xh6 ♖e8!?

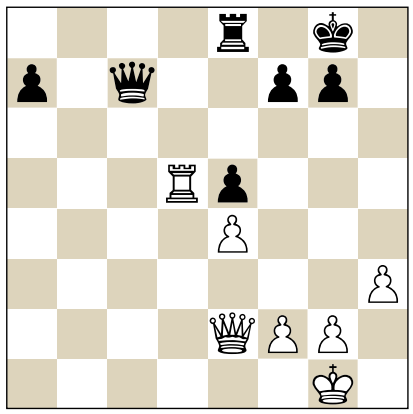
After 25...gxh6, 26.♖xf7! wins, because after 26...♔xf7, 27.♕h7 mates on the seventh rank. However, not taking the bishop but only a pawn works, because after 25...♕xa2!? 26.♕g4 ♕xb3 27.♖7d6 White looks to be winning, since he is threatening to take on c8 and f6, but 27...♖cb8! is a good defence in view of 28.♖xf6? ♕xd1+! 29.♕xd1 ♖b1!.

26.♕g4 ♕xa2 27.e4 ♕xb3 28.♗e3 ♖b7!

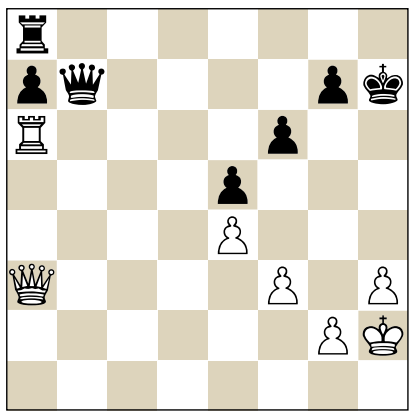
White's initiative is fading, and Black is successfully neutralizing to a draw.

29.♖7d6 ♗e7 30.♖6d5 ♗f8 31.♗xc5 ♗xc5 32.♖xc5 ♕e6 33.♕e2 ♖d7 34.♖xd7 ♕xd7 35.♖d5 ♕c7

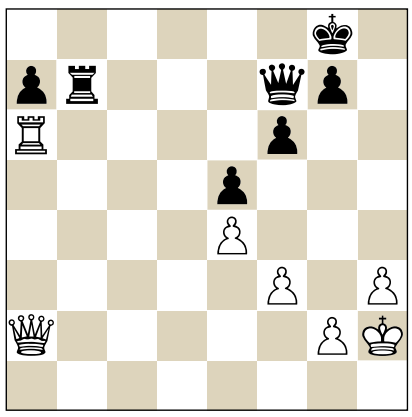
This would have been a good moment to agree to a draw, had it not been for the fact that Magnus desperately needed to win in order to catch up with the leaders. In addition, the tournament was played by the Corsican rules, which meant that no draw offers were allowed.

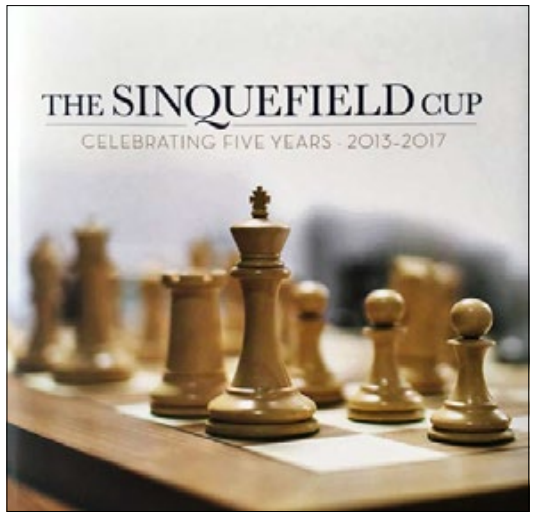


36.♕d2 ♖a8 37.♖d7 ♕c4 38.f3 ♕c5+ 39.♔h2 ♕c6
A computer would happily have pushed 39...a5!, since after 40.♕a2 ♕f8 41.♕d5 a4! 42.♖xf7 ♕xf7 43.♕xa8+ ♔h7 44.♕xa4 ♕f4+! Black gives perpetual check.
40.♖d6 ♕c5 41.♖a6 ♕e7 42.♕e3 ♔h7 43.♔g3 ♕b7 44.♕a3 f6 45.♔h2!



Walking up the board with the king or starting to push the pawns will only lose, so Magnus shows discipline and retracts his steps.
45...♕c7 46.♕a1 ♕b7 47.♕a5 ♕d7 48.♕a2 ♕e7 49.♕f2 ♕b7 50.♕a2 ♕e7 51.♕d5!?
An interesting idea. At first it looks as if it allows Black to activate his passive rook, but it has a hidden point.
51...♖b8 52.♕a5 ♖b7
Nothing was wrong with 52...♖a8, but Nakamura wants to 'punish' White's seeming inaccuracy.
53.♕e1 ♕d7 54.♕h4+ ♔g8 55.♕f2 ♕f7?! 56.♕a2!?
An interesting idea that was only made possible because the rook is now on b7 and not a8. At first it seems absurd to offer a queen swap, but it allows White more freedom to activate his king and start pushing his kingside pawns. Having said that, even without the a7-pawn the ensuing endgame would be considered a trivial draw.

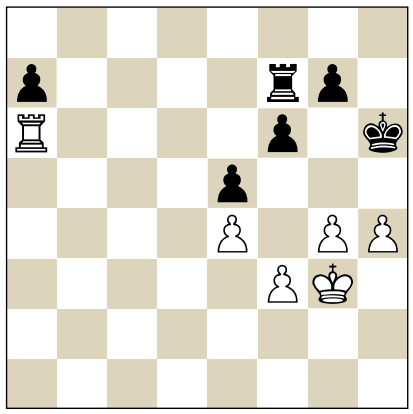




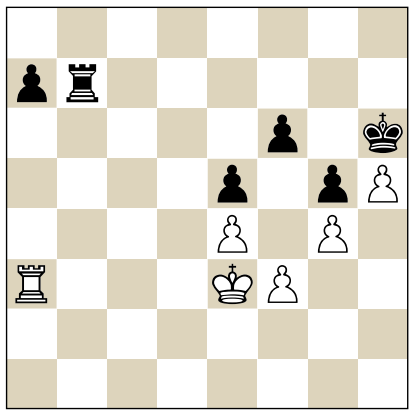
As the Saint Louis Chess Club celebrates its 10th anniversary, the World Chess Hall of Fame has published a book on the first five editions of the Sinquefield Cup, the flagship event of America's chess capital. Beautifully produced and lavishly illustrated this big coffee table book (hardcover, 334 pages) is a fitting tribute to a tournament where standards of excellence have become the norm. The stories and games are captured in five essays (including easily accessible game analysis) by St. Louis regulars Yasser Seirawan, Jennifer Shahade, Alejandro Ramirez, Tatev Abrahamyan and Maurice Ashley. The many photos by Harry Benson, Austin Fuller, Lennart Ootes and others, give the reader the feeling that they are at an exhibition of the finest chess photography of the day (DJtG).

The Sinquefield Cup, Celebrating Five Years: 2013-2017
more info: www.qboutiquestl.com

56...♕xa2 57.♖xa2 With Black's rook on a8, Black could have gone 57...a5!. **57...♔h7 58.♖a6 ♔g6 59.h4 ♔h5 60.♔h3 ♖f7 61.g4+ ♔h6 62.♔g3**



White has made some progress and starts 'threatening' g5+. What should Black do about it? The answer is: absolutely nothing! After 62...♔g6 63.g5 the threat of 64.♔g4 is easily parried with 63...♔h5!, when White can make no progress, and it will be a trivial draw.
62...g5?! 63.h5 ♔g7 64.♔f2 ♖b7 65.♖a3 ♔h6 66.♔e3



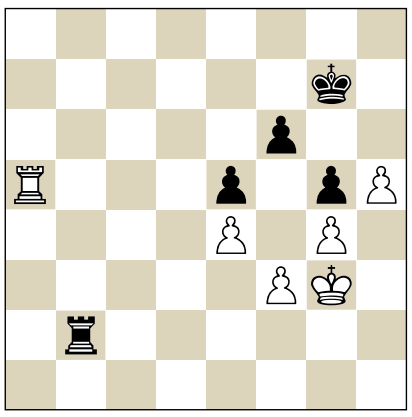
Nakamura starts feeling the pressure, because the draw is no longer as trivial as it seemed before. Black's idea of a fortress blocking the d-file won't work, because the protected passed pawn on h5 allows a rook exchange leading to a winning pawn ending for White.
66...a5?? After 66...♖d7! 67.♖d3 ♖b7! it is still a relatively easy and concrete draw. If 68.♔d2 a5 69.♔c3 a4 70.♔c4 ♔g7 71.♖a3 then 71...♖d7! is a key point, since 72.♖xa4 ♖d4+! allows 73...♖d3, with an instant draw. Similarly, 69.♖a3 ♖b5 70.♔c3 ♔h7

71.♔c4 ♖b4+ 72.♔c5 ♖d4! 73.♖xa5 ♖d3 74.♖a7+ ♔h6 75.♖f7 ♖xf3 76.♔d5 ♖f4! is just in time to secure the draw. We are analysing concrete variations with Black drawing by a tempo – not what Black was expecting just a few moves back. Nakamura has not made the mental shift yet, and is still under the impression that he has an impregnable fortress.

67.♖xa5

My initial idea of annotating this game was to give a detailed analysis of the endgame, but all there is to say is that White is winning! Unbeknownst to most of us, including me, the plan had already been demonstrated in a game at the 2013 Reykjavik Open between Gajewski (who was present in St. Louis as Anand's second) and Vachier-Lagrave (who sat next to this game, still playing Karjakin!).

67...♖b3+ 68.♔f2 ♖b2+ 69.♔g3 ♔g7



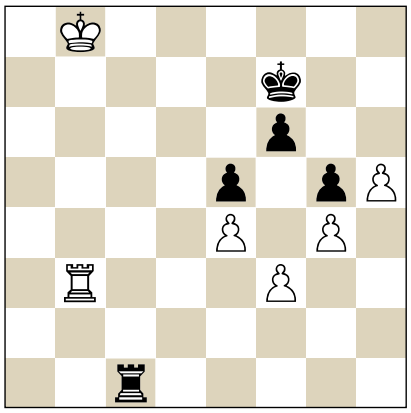
The intended fortress. But since all pawn endings are winning for White, continuously offering rook swaps will break down the black fortress.

70.♖a7+?! Principled perfectionism. Since if 70...♔h6, 71.♖f7! wins immediately, White now forces the black king to lose a tempo. However, much more relevant is that Black gets one move closer to a draw after 50 moves without a pawn being pushed!

70...♔g8 71.♖a1 ♔g7 72.♖f1 ♖a2 73.♖f2!

The principal idea, offering a rook swap to gain access for White's king.

73...♖a3 74.♖d2 ♖a7 75.♔f2 ♔f7 76.♔e2 ♖b7 77.♖d3 ♖a7 78.♔d2 ♔e6 79.♔c3 ♔e7 80.♔c4 ♖c7+ 81.♔b5 ♖c1 82.♖b3 ♔f7 83.♔b6 ♖c2 84.♔b7 ♖c1 85.♔b8!

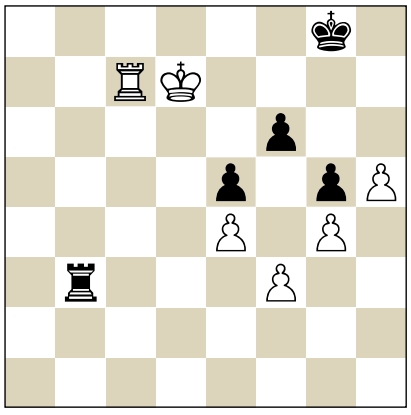


The target position. Now ♖b7-c7 is the way to open a route for White's king.

85...♔g8!? 86.♖b6! Forcing the king to defend the f-pawn, ensuring that ♖b7 will be check.

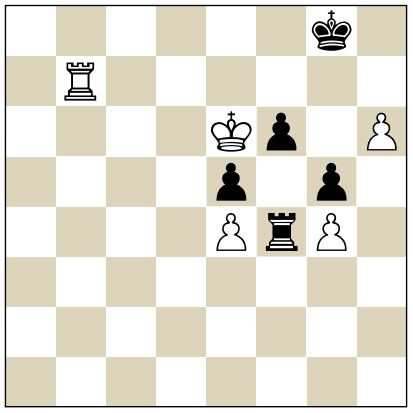
86...♔g7 87.♖b7+ ♔g8 If 87...♔h6, then 88.♖f7! ♖c6 89.♔b7 is a simple win.

88.♖c7! ♖b1+ 89.♔c8 ♖b3 90.♔d7!

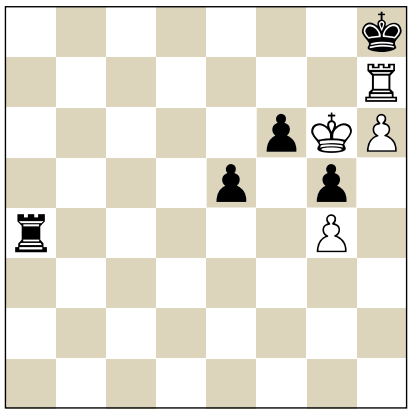


The only slightly complex moment in an otherwise very mechanical way to win this endgame. Black will win a couple of pawns, but White's king will take a dominant position, combining mating threats with creating another, this time decisive, passed pawn.

90...♖xf3 91.♔e6 ♖f4 92.h6 ♔h8 93.♖b7 ♔g8



94.♖g7+! Since 94...♔f8 95.♖g6!, followed by 96.h7, mates instantly, Black now has to allow the white king access to the g6-square. **94...♔h8 95.♔f7 ♖xe4 96.♔g6 ♖a4 97.♖h7+**



97.♖e7 also was sufficient, but this ensures that an eventual h7 will be with check and gain a tempo in the positions in which White's king has taken the f- and g-pawns and White will start advancing his own pawns. Nakamura had seen enough and resigned. ■

St. Louis Sinquefield Cup 2018 — **cat. XXII**

					1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		TPR
1	Levon Aronian	IGM	ARM	2767	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	½	½	1	5½	2870
2	Magnus Carlsen	IGM	NOR	2842	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	5½	2864
3	Fabiano Caruana	IGM	USA	2822	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	1	1	5½	2861
4	Shakhriyar Mamedyarov	IGM	AZE	2801	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	1	½	½	5	2829
5	Maxime Vachier-Lagrave	IGM	FRA	2779	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	½	4½	2788
6	Vishy Anand	IGM	IND	2768	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	½	½	½	4½	2790
7	Alexander Grischuk	IGM	RUS	2766	0	½	½	½	½	½	*	½	1	½	4½	2790
8	Wesley So	IGM	USA	2780	½	½	½	0	½	½	½	*	½	½	4	2745
9	Hikaru Nakamura	IGM	USA	2777	½	0	0	½	½	½	0	½	*	½	3	2664
10	Sergey Karjakin	IGM	RUS	2773	0	0	0	½	½	½	½	½	½	*	3	2664

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- Is the Fegatello still alive?
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Judit Polgar

Dream opponent?

Fabiano Caruana is the Challenger that Magnus Carlsen had been hoping for. **JUDIT POLGAR** weighs the players' chances in what she firmly believes will be one of the most closely contested fights in modern history. A highly anticipated match, in London, 18 years after a stunning upset in that same city.

Traditionally, world title matches have been disputed between players of different generations. But now, for the second time, after the match between Magnus Carlsen and Sergey Karjakin, who were both born in 1990, the contestants are almost the same age, as the World Champion is only one and a half years older than Fabiano Caruana. It may be a sign that the IT generation is ruling nowadays.

Unlike Carlsen's previous three world title encounters, the supremacy will be disputed between the two highest rated players in the world rankings. In an interview during the early rounds of the 2018 Candidates Tournament in Berlin, Carlsen expressed his hope that the winner would be Caruana, because he would be the strongest challenger he could get right now. Quite a clear illustration of sportsmanship's spirit!

It reminded me of Garry Kasparov's wish to play a match with Vladimir Kramnik. Previous to their world championship match in 2000 in London(!), Kramnik had given Kasparov quite a few hard moments and at that point one could not think of a more uncomfortable opponent for the World Champion. The final result of the match – Kasparov lost without winning a single game – speaks for itself...

Caruana had come close to qualifying for the title match two years ago at the Candidates Tournament in Moscow. After failing to do so, due to a last-round loss from a better position against Sergey Karjakin, Fabiano displayed great sportsmanship by visiting the venue of the New York match and joining the live commentary. With hindsight, it looks like a way of preparing himself psychologically for the 2018 edition...

The first step in the process of understanding both players' chances is checking the statistics. From a historical perspective, they largely favour Carlsen, but over the last year the tendency is rather promising for Caruana.

From the numerous classical tournaments that both of them participated in, Carlsen won first prize 11 times against Caruana only three times. But out of these, Caruana won two tournaments ahead of Carlsen in 2018! In the recent Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis, their last tournament before the match, they finished in a tie for first place together with Levon Aronian.

Carlsen is an excellent rapid and blitz player, having won several world titles with these time rates, and his match against Karjakin clearly showed that he has nothing against deciding the match in a play-off. Carlsen's advantage seems to be even clearer in blitz. He won many tournaments in which Caruana finished in bottom place or close to it. In rapid chess Caruana has had decent results, without being a specialist, though.

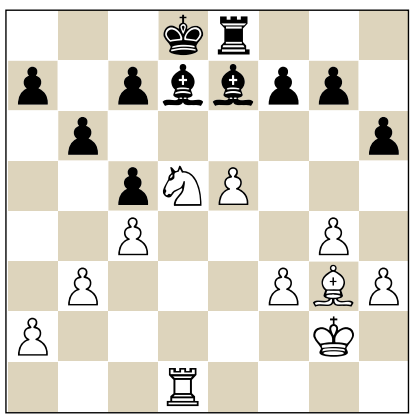
While results in classical tournaments are suggestive of the players' class, we should not forget that a match

'Both players are in excellent physical shape and play for a win with either colour.'

consists only of direct encounters. There, Carlsen has a large advantage against Caruana, with 11 classical wins against five losses and many draws in between. Moreover, Caruana's last win dates back to August 2015. Carlsen has won three games since then, the last one in Norway Chess 2018, shortly after Caruana's win in the Candidates.

At the same time, it is interesting to note that an important ingredient of Caruana's successes is his excellent score against the Berlin Defence, which has been a major nightmare for 1.e4 players ever since the Kasparov-Kramnik match and is one of Carlsen's main weapons with Black. Both games that the Champion lost against his Challenger with this opening offer a similar and slightly worrying picture.

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Shamkir 2014



position after 24.♖d1

Black's position is difficult already, but Carlsen's next move is just a blunder.

24...♔c8?

Losing a pawn for nothing. It's hard to say what Magnus overlooked.

After the relatively better 24...c6 25.♘xe7 ♖xe7 26.♗h4 g5 27.♗g3, Black's kingside is awfully weak, but the game is still on.

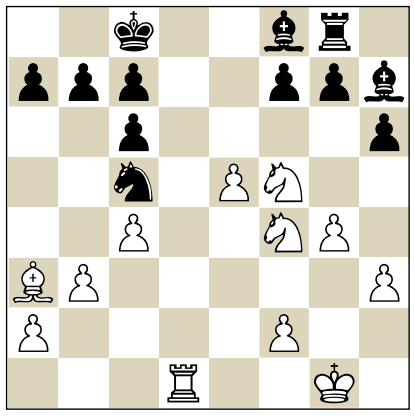
25.♘xc7! ♖d8 In case of 25...♔xc7?, 26.e6+ wins on the spot.

26.♘d5

White has a material and positional advantage and Fabiano won (1-0, 53).

Things were equally depressing for Black in the next game.

Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Stavanger 2015



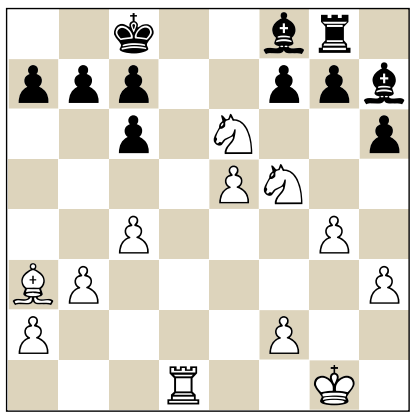
position after 22.♗a3

White has overwhelming activity, while Black is still underdeveloped. But this is not really unusual in the Berlin Defence and Black could have retained a defensible position with 22...b6.

22...♘e6?

Probably caused by a miscalculation, this leads straight to trouble.

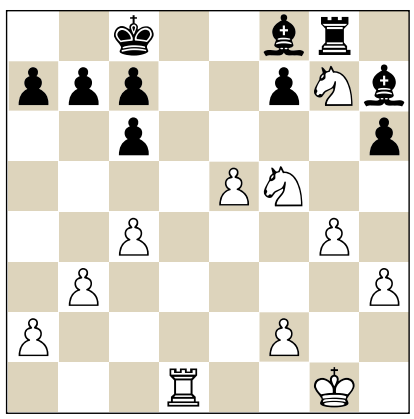
23.♘xe6



23...♗xa3

Carlsen may have overlooked that 23...fxe6 runs into 24.♗e7!! and White wins, for instance 24...b6 25.♖d8+ ♔b7 26.♗xf8 exf5 27.e6.

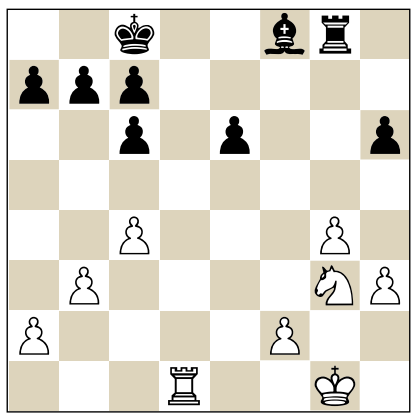
24.♘exg7 ♗f8



A second, but less probable explanation is that he thought he would win the knight due to the potential pin along the g-file.

25.e6! ♗xf5 The point is that after 25...fxe6 26.♘xe6 the knight on f5 is taboo due to 27.♖d8 mate.

26.♘xf5 fxe6 27.♘g3



With a strategically won position that Caruana duly converted (1-0, 45).

These games may suggest that Caruana has the ability of setting up the type of positional pressure where Carlsen is likely to blunder. But at the same time this has not been happening in their direct encounters for three years already!

The moment has come to mention a few off-board details. Caruana is a player with iron nerves, who always keeps his composure during the game. He rarely breaks down and usually grabs any given chance.

Both players are in excellent physical shape and play for a win with either colour. Their families are very supportive and frequently accompany them to tournaments. In particular, both fathers seem to be an element of stability for their sons.

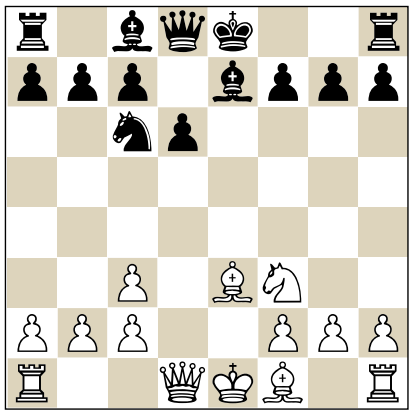
Off the board, the match will also be a duel of the seconds. Previously Peter Heine Nielsen and Rustam Kasimdzhanov were part of the same team when they assisting Vishy Anand during a few world title matches, but now they will act as rivals as they help Carlsen and Caruana, respectively.

One of the best indicators about the players' strength balance may be offered

by the last game they played against each other before the match, at the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis.

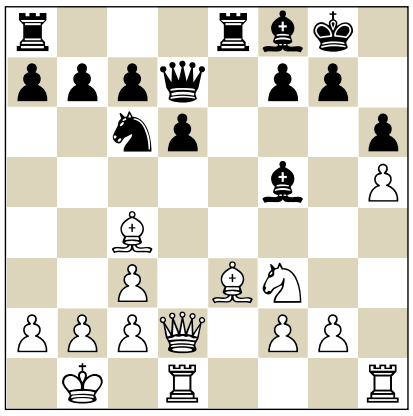
Magnus Carlsen
Fabiano Caruana
St. Louis 2018 (7)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘xe5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘xe4 5.♘c3 ♘xc3 6.dxc3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 ♘c6



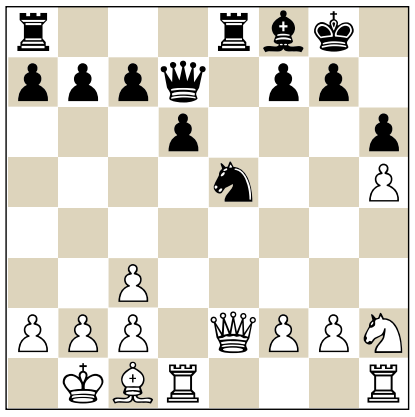
8.♗c4!?
A rare move, which has almost never been played between grandmasters before.

8...0-0 9.♕d2 ♗f5 10.0-0-0 ♕d7 11.♔b1 ♖fe8 12.h4 ♗f8 13.h5 h6



14.♗e2!
An apparently mysterious decision. The main idea seems to be preparing ♘h2 followed by g2-g4 without running into ...♘e5.

14...♗g4 15.♘h2 ♗xe2 16.♕xe2 ♘e5 17.♗c1



White has regrouped perfectly and is ready to launch his kingside pawn attack. As if by miracle, after a quiet opening, there is no easy way to equalize for Black. This is quite typical for Carlsen's deep positional understanding.

17...♕c6 18.f4 ♘c4 19.♕d3 ♕e4 20.g4 ♘e3
Caruana confessed that at this stage of the game he still thought that Black did not have any special problems.

21.♖de1 ♕xd3 22.cxd3 ♘d5 23.♖eg1!

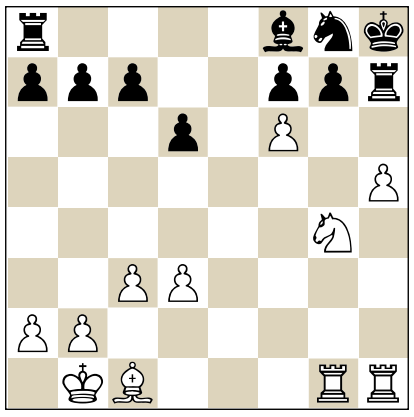
'Only the future will tell whether Caruana's machinelike play can prevail over Carlsen's strategic depth and originality.'

This move is the fruit of exceptionally deep positional understanding. White needs all his forces for the attack while Black has no counterplay along the e-file.

23...♖e6 24.g5 ♘e7 25.gxh6 ♖xh6 26.f5 ♖h7
Things have run smoothly for White so far, but now he needs to take concrete decisions.

27.♘g4
An inaccuracy, allowing Black a passive, but compact regrouping.
27.f6! would have been stronger, as after 27...♘d5 28.♘g4 the black knight is exposed to c3-c4. If 28...♔h8? 29.♗g5 ♖e8 30.c4 ♘b4 31.fxg7+ ♗xg7 32.h6 ♗d4 33.♗f6+ ♗xf6 34.♘xf6 and White wins. Black's only defence is 28...g6, with a clearly worse position.

27...♔h8 28.f6 ♘g8!



After this retreat Carlsen started losing faith in his winning chances. In fact, he could still have kept Black under serious pressure with the paralyzing 29.h6, for instance 29...gxh6 30.♖h5, when Black's kingside pieces are immobile.

29.fxg7?!+ ♖xg7 30.♗e3 c5 31.♗f4 ♖e8
And Black managed to gradually neutralize White's pressure and the game ended in a draw by a threefold repetition right after the time-control.

32.♘e3 ♖xg1+ 33.♖xg1 ♖e6 34.♘d5 ♘f6 35.♘c7 ♖e2 36.♘b5 ♖e6 37.♖f1 ♔g8 38.♘c7 ♖e2 39.♘b5 ♖e6 40.♘c7 ♖e2 41.♘b5 ♖e6 ½-½.

This game features alarming elements for both players. For Caruana's fans it is worrying that he was outplayed out of almost nothing in an opening which has become his specialty lately. But Carlsen's failure to successfully end a well-played game reminds of his missed wins in Games 3 and 4 in the match against Karjakin.

Conclusion

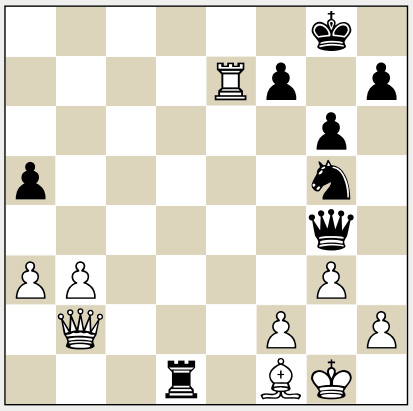
- I am sure that this will be one of the most interesting and hard disputed matches of modern times.
- Carlsen starts as the favourite, not least because he has world championship match experience. But only the future will tell whether Caruana's machinelike play can prevail over Carlsen's strategic depth and originality.
- In case of a play-off, Carlsen should be credited with the best chances. ■

MAXIMize your Tactics

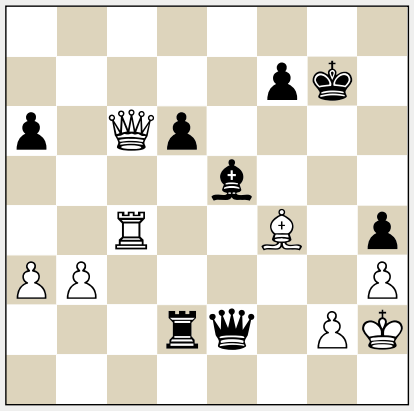
with Maxim Notkin

Find the best move in the positions below

Solutions on page 93



1. Black to move



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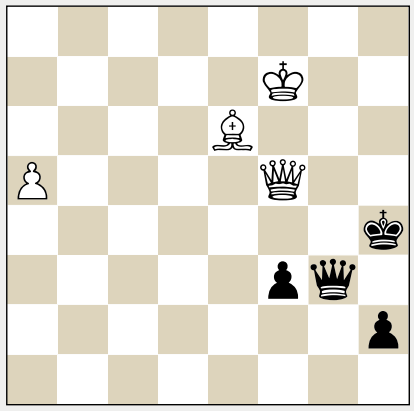
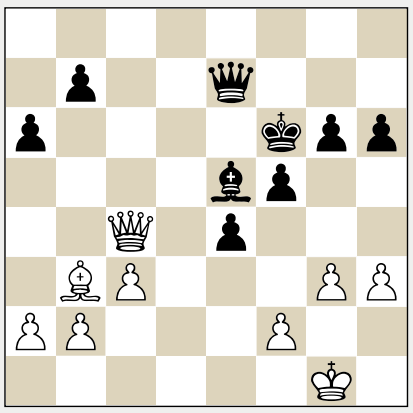


3. White to move



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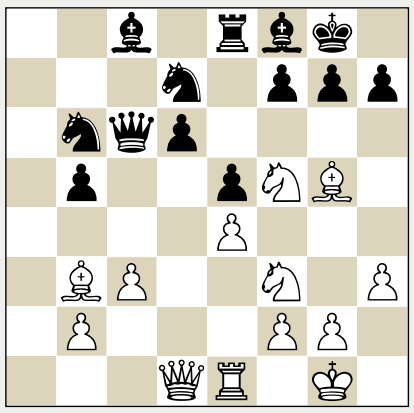

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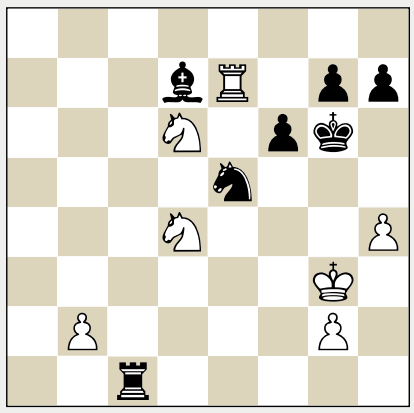
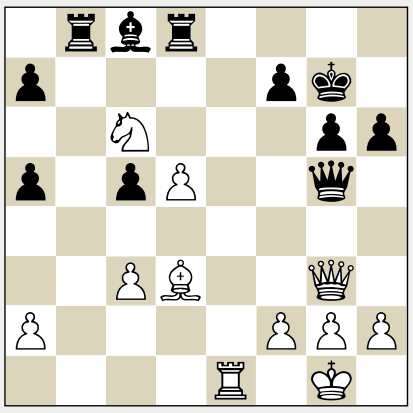
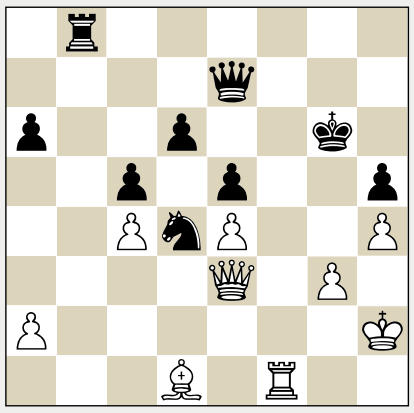


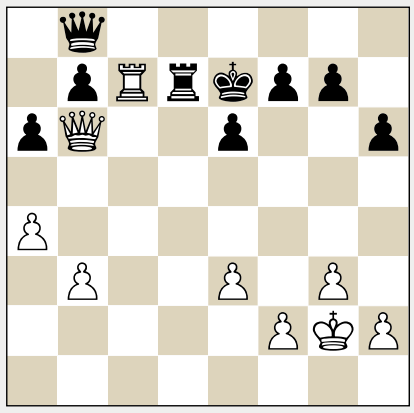
6. White to move



7. Black to move



8. White to move



9. White to move

Searching for Fabiano Caruana

How a talented kid from Brooklyn became America's big chess hope

The iconic photo of Bruce Pandolfini and 8-year-old Fabiano Caruana, shot in Washington Square Park, that appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine in 2001. And the 2015 remake.

He is the first American-born player since Bobby Fischer to play for the chess crown. And his rapidly growing fan base has good reason to believe in his chances. **JOHN HENDERSON** profiles Magnus Carlsen's challenger in the upcoming World Championship match in London.

'That's right,' quipped the sardonic Jon Stewart on 'The Daily Show'. 'The United States is buying up nerds, nerd mercenaries.' That was the humorous spin from the former host of the cult comedy show back in the spring of 2015, with reports circulating in the national media of the world's top chess players being offered substantial amounts of money to play for the US.

It all came about after Wesley So switched allegiances from the Philippines to the US, and rumours were now swirling that Fabiano Caruana, who at that point represented the Italian Chess Federation, would soon be next. Stewart, on his hit show, was having more than just a little fun at the perceived nerdiness in chess circles under the heading of his 'Chess News Roundup'. And sure enough, a few days later, as Caruana and the

US Chess Federation confirmed this to be true, World Champion Magnus Carlsen tweeted: 'So they are indeed buying nerds!'

For the most part, the financial details behind the move remained murky, but that didn't stop many speculating that a certain St. Louis chess patron was the one behind the deal, and he may have offered Caruana more than $100,000 to make the move. Fanciful perhaps, as both denied any money had changed hands – but what many in the mainstream media failed to grasp, was that it wasn't so much a case of 'buying nerds', it was more like seeing one return home again, as few fully appreciated that he was born in America, lived in America, played chess in America.

Fabiano Caruana was born on Thursday, 30 July 1992, in Miami, Florida, to Italian-American parents Lou and Santina Caruana. Like many in the same circumstances, this offered him dual citizenship of Italy and the United States – but unlike many others, the dual citizenship was later to come in handy for Caruana, as the family embarked on their somewhat peripatetic European chess journey, before returning home again to where it all started.

The first journey for Fabiano was at the age of four, as his family packed their bags to relocate to New York, settling in the neighbourhood of Park Slope, Brooklyn – and like the late Bobby Fischer before him, this is also where his path to the chess summit officially began. There, he first learned the basics of chess, but was soon receiving more formal training in the game, attending Carol Ann Caronia's after-school class at Park Slope's Congregation Beth Elohim.

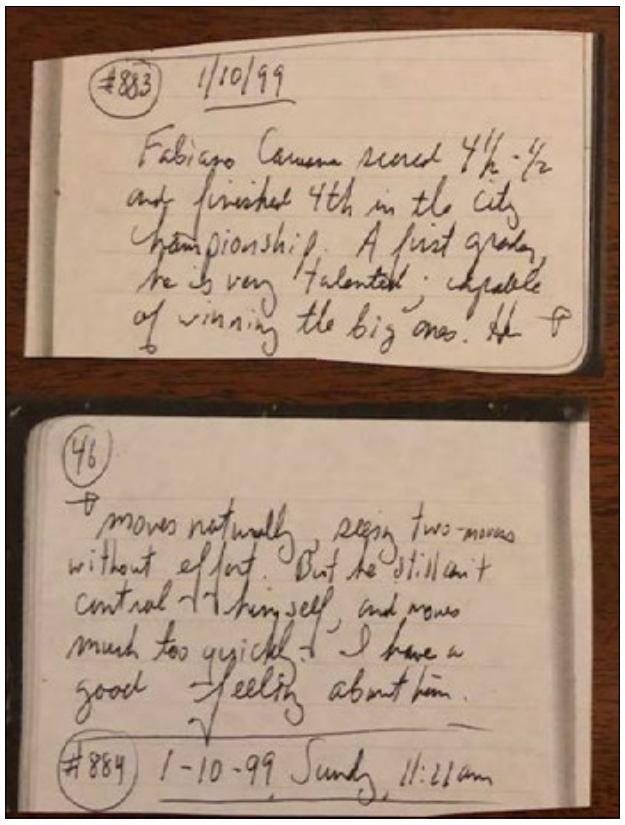
It was around late 1997, Caronia would tell the story, that this soft-spoken, bespectacled kid, aged about five, first came to her class, eager to learn more about chess, and equally more eager to play, and play, and play. He was a 'very serious child,' she observed. While other kids, even the good ones, want to talk, to fool around, that just wasn't the young Fabiano's style. 'He was there to win the games.' And when he did, there was no screams of adulation, no showing off his latest conquest, no little jig of joy: He just won.

Bruce Pandolfini

It soon became obvious that her new student would need more chess training than she could offer, even more so after Fabiano played in his first official tournament, near the end of that first year, at the Susan Polgar Chess Center in Queens, New York. There would be no holding him back now, so she put the budding young prodigy in contact with his first serious chess coach, the renowned National Master Bruce Pandolfini.

Pandolfini was, of course, previously coach to Josh Waitzkin, whose father, Fred Waitzkin, wrote the book *Searching for Bobby Fischer*, which was subsequently turned into an unlikely hit movie of the same name, with Pandolfini being portrayed by Oscar-winner Ben Kingsley. 'The raw talent Fabiano possessed was obvious from our very first meeting,' Pandolfini recalled during a call to his Manhattan home. He realized he had a potential talent on his hands, one that showed no interest whatsoever in opening theory, as most kids of his age tended to do, but instead was more looking at the bigger picture over the chessboard of strategy and tactics, especially tactics. 'Back then, he was like a little calculating machine with tactics – you could almost see the process going on in his head through his eyes.'

It didn't take long for Pandolfini to be nostalgically reaching across his desk for one of his early notebook observations he had jotted down on Caruana, a particular habit he'd come to find very useful over the years for all his chess students, a sort of *aide-mémoire*. He read from one of his first entries on Caruana, #883, from Sunday, 10 January 1999, soon after returning from a promising early performance: 'Fabiano Caruana scored 4½-½ and finished 4th in the city championship. A first grader, he is very talented; capable of winning the big ones. He moves naturally, seeing two-movers without effort...'



Entries on Fabiano Caruana in Bruce Pandolfini's notebooks. 'A first grader, he is very talented; capable of winning the big ones. He moves naturally, seeing two-movers without effort...'

'He was focused, he was a true fighter – and nothing can make him change his mind.'

Pandolfini also saw in the young Fabiano additional strong traits that would make him more likely to succeed where others had failed. 'He was focused, he was a true fighter – and nothing can make him change his mind.' I'd heard Pandolfini say this of Caruana, and he repeats a good line he's said in previous interviews. 'Fabiano's greatest strength, is that he has the courage of his convictions... and the bad thing about him, is he also has the courage of

his convictions!' By that, he means that Caruana is stubborn, and come hell or high water, it is not easily to persuade him otherwise.

And this conviction, Pandolfini firmly believes, will also work to his advantage when he plays Magnus Carlsen in their World Championship match in London. 'He won't be overawed by the occasion. He certainly won't be scared to mix it against Magnus, and he will definitely come out fighting from the start – and he will go into the match with a very specific game-plan for every scenario. Nothing will persuade him to make a change, regardless of what happens.'

'He will go into the match with a very specific game-plan for every scenario.'

Iconic bench scene

It was obvious to those around the US chess scene at the time that there was a genuine rapport between the two. And in a footnote to those formative early years, this unwittingly led to Fabiano being thrust into the national media spotlight for the very first time. In 2001, while not fully appreciating he was being used as a prop, his photo appeared in *The New Yorker* magazine, when he was eight. It was a very rainy afternoon, he was wearing an oversized rain jacket that looked about two sizes too big for him, and standing somewhat precariously on a Washington Square Park bench in the notorious chess quarter. He held an umbrella in one hand, with the other, he was stretching across a chessboard, to make a move in a game against his coach, who was the subject of a profile being written by author and journalist Paul Hoffman, that the photograph accompanied.

'He was totally unaware of what was going on around him; his only interest was on the chessboard,' recalls Pandolfini. 'He wasn't interested in playing along by posing for the photographer at all – the only thing he was focused on was the chess. Nothing but the chess.' People often say 'A picture is worth a thousand words.' And here, that certainly proved to be the case, as the picture went a long way in explaining the amazing student-coach dynamic between the two. It also led to an amusing full-circle in the Pandolfini-Caruana friendship/relationship.

In 2015, when Caruana returned home to America, he linked up with Hoffman, now President and CEO of Liberty Science Center (LSC) in New Jersey, who made him a brand ambassador for LSC. Hoffman also reconnected Caruana with his first coach while they were in New York, and to commemorate the occasion, with it being another rainy afternoon, they all wandered once again into Washington Square Park to recreate that iconic bench scene from fourteen years ago – only this time, it was Pandolfini who was the prop for an LSC publicity shot accompanying a Hoffman article on Caruana!

NEW IN CHESS

Fabiano Caruana together with Vladimir Chuchelov at the prize-giving of the 2014 Sparkassen tournament in Dortmund, where he took first place and first broke the 2800 barrier.

Relentless work ethic

Before that, though, there were more coaches to learn from, not to mention more of the long journey to become a title-challenger. In a little over two years under the protective wing of Pandolfini, the coach could do no more for his rapidly rising student. And with Pandolfini's endorsement, Fabiano took the big step with his next coach being GM Miron Sher, whom he trained with over the next four years.

It was here that Fabiano really honed and refined his meticulous opening preparation. It was also here that it was instilled in the youngster to play almost non-stop in tournaments, a relentless work ethic that has remained with him throughout his career, as he's always been one of the most active players on the elite circuit. Also during this period, he trained with GM Pal Benko, when Pal was spending long summers in New Jersey, and via the Internet with GM Gregory Kaidanov. Like a sponge, he absorbed everything he could from each and every coach and

trainer – and all the hard work was beginning to pay off.

By age 10, Fabiano had become the youngest American to defeat a grandmaster in an official tournament, and by age 12 he had obtained his FIDE Master title. He also won several national scholastic championships, as well as two gold medals representing the USA at the Pan-American Youth Championships.

But to realize his talent, to develop further, Sher advised Caruana that his best hope would be to spend a prolonged period of time in Europe, his belief being that the opportunity to play in many top tournaments with stronger competitors, and have access to more experienced world-class coaches, would vastly improve his young student's desire to become a professional chess player. And that led to the biggest gamble of all for the Caruana family.

Heading for Europe

We all know through Fred Waitzkin's *Searching for Bobby Fischer* book and hit movie, through the rise of Magnus Carlsen as chronicled in Simen Agdestein's *Wonderboy*, and, more recently, Benjamin Ree's 'Magnus' documentary, that there's a central recurring theme: Parents having to deal with the pain and hurdles of guiding their children to the top in chess, and how best to achieve this. Lou and Santina Caruana were no different. They really wanted to see their talented son flourish, and for that to happen, they made arguably one of the toughest calls any parent could: the family packed their bags and headed to Europe.

Speaking in 2007 to the *The New York Times* about the decision to move, Lou Caruana confirmed: 'It was hard to evaluate. It was more of a risk than what we had realised at the time, but it did work out.' And it wasn't just to benefit their son – they also thought this would be an ideal time in their life to explore a few countries in Europe for a few years. But their sojourn of a couple of years turned into a decade – though with a purpose, to allow Fabiano to pursue chess professionally, and that's what he did, while also working with coaches in Spain, Hungary and Switzerland.

The first port of call was Madrid, as Sher had recommended Fabiano spend time working alongside IM Boris Zlotnik, a no-nonsense, respected Russian trainer who had done much to improve the lot of Moscow juniors. Being a diligent worker, Fabiano easily coped with Zlotnik's demanding work-load and tough homework assignments. Madrid was also an easy gateway to lots of European-wide norm tournaments – not only in Spain, but also in other places like the Netherlands and Germany, and Hungary. And that Italian dual citizenship also came in handy. During this period, Fabiano was also approached with an anonymous sponsorship deal to play for Italy – and with it, there was the prospect of playing top board in the Olympiad and European Team Championship. So by 2007, the Caruanas once again packed their well-travelled bags to be based for an extended period in Budapest, where Fabiano's new coach, Alexander Chernin, lived.

Living in Budapest, though, proved to be an isolating experience for the young Fabiano. 'I didn't understand the language, so I don't have friends,' he told *The New York Times*. But there was an unintended benefit to the loneliness and isolation: it meant that playing and training consumed almost all of his time now. And with Budapest being the home to László Nagy's fabled 'norm factory' of monthly tournaments, by July 2007, at the age of 14, he won the First Saturday tournament to become the youngest grandmaster in the history of the United States, beating in the process Bobby Fischer's record. Not only that, but with the dual citizenship, he was now also the youngest-ever Italian grandmaster.

Fabiano Caruana

Born: July 30, 1992, Miami, Florida

Career highlights

2007: At 14, youngest American & Italian GM
2007: 1st in Vlissingen (TPR 2715)
2007: Youngest Italian Champion
2009: 1st in Wijk aan Zee Challengers
2012: 1st Reykjavik Open
2012: Enters Top-10
2013: 1st Zurich Chess Challenge
2013: 1st= Paris FIDE GP
2013: 1st Kings Tournament
2014: 1st Dortmund, breaks 2800 barrier
2014: 1st Sinquefield Cup, starts with 7/7
2015: Overall winner FIDE GP
2015: 1st Dortmund
2016: 2nd Moscow Candidates
2016: US Champion
2016: Gold for USA at Baku Olympiad
2017: 1st London Chess Classic
2018: 1st Berlin Candidates
2018: 1st Grenke Chess Classic ahead of Magnus Carlsen
2018: 1st= Sinquefield Cup
2018: Silver with USA & top board individual silver at Batumi Olympiad

Going places

With the grandmaster title, there came invites. It also added an extra confidence and toughness to his game. In quick succession, he made a major breakthrough by winning the strong Vlissingen tournament in the Netherlands, and later in 2007 – after the disappointment of losing out the previous year in a playoff – he dominated the Italian Championship to win the title with a resounding +8 score of 9½/11 to be the youngest-ever winner. Chess-wise, Fabiano was finally going places. And travel-wise, his family were also going places, as they started to pack their bags once again. This time, Switzerland.

NEW IN CHESS

St. Louis 2014 (7/7!). Star photographer Harry Benson signed his Fischer book for Fabiano Caruana and expressed trust in his potential: 'He's a champion. He's got cold eyes.'

In late 2010, the family relocated to Lugano. The reason? To be closer to Vladimir Chuchelov, the Moscow-born Belgium grandmaster, a highly regarded professional trainer, who lived there. After a lacklustre twelve months, Fabiano had become quite disillusioned with his results, and felt the time was right to change trainers. That inconsistency that had crept into his play continued through 2011, and Chuchelov believed his student was not focused enough on his game, and he had to be doing something else with his time other than working. His instinct was confirmed by his son, Alexandre, who had struck up a friendship with his father's new student, and had unwittingly revealed that Fabiano – using the Led Zeppelin-inspired alias of 'Evermore' – had been spending a lot of his time playing a particular online computer game, and his extremely high score could only be attributed to spending a lot of his time playing it!

In a Skype conversation I had with Chuchelov, he also confirmed that at first it was difficult, not just for him, but also for Fabiano. His initial hunch was that Fabiano had lost his energy, his motivation for chess, and this is what was holding him back. 'At the start, it wasn't easy to gain his trust. We both needed the time to have, you know, a "feel" for each other. It felt very much like him testing me, rather than me being the one testing him,' he confided. 'Once that trust and understanding between us was gained, only then could the really hard work begin.' And with a little added laugh, there came the amusing aside: 'I knew Fabiano now was taking his chess more seriously again – my son said he was no longer online playing that computer game!'

The next step

But still, initially Fabiano's performances were nothing special, more a bit of a rollercoaster ride. That didn't worry Chuchelov so much, as he knew he was talented and was working and studying hard on his chess, so all this would not be in vain. 'To reach the top, the very top, it is all about a state of mind; state of the body – all of the elements have to come together.' What was needed was steadily improving results, and that's what emerged over the next year or so. Chuchelov also felt that the next step, the defining breakthrough, could come sooner rather than later.

It was in the second half of 2014 when all the hard work finally came to fruition, as Fabiano made the metamorphosis from being a star to a superstar of chess. There were the usual 'stable' performances, but then several outstanding performances, followed by one simply phenomenal performance. It all started in July when he won Dortmund by a canter, with a full 1½-point winning margin ahead of Peter Leko – the victory being all the sweeter, as he finally broke the 2800 rating barrier!

And as that summer got hotter with August, so did Fabiano. Playing on top board for Italy at the Tromsø Olympiad, he scored 7½/9. Later that same month, like the prodigal son, he returned 'home' to the US to play again, at the Sinquefield Cup in St. Louis, where he electrified everyone by scoring the biggest and most famous victory of his career. It started with seven straight wins, as he left all the world's elite in his wake, and he went on to capture victory with a breath-taking winning score of 8½/10, three points clear of second place Magnus Carlsen.

'There were no screams of adulation during that streak of seven games', says Chuchelov. 'We were pleased, obviously, but we tried to remain calm and professional about it; just go about our planned work – but as we looked at each other, we understood that everything was changing now. He had reached a peak; a harmony, if you will, where everything – mind, body and soul – had finally converged.'

From that moment, Chuchelov knew Fabiano was going to be a challenger for the World Championship crown. And with chess dominance often being measured by the margin of victory, this one was up there among some of the best in history. It also helped establish Fabiano in the No.2 spot behind Carlsen, which immediately set off an intense rivalry between the two – and with it

'There was an unintended benefit to the loneliness and isolation: it meant that playing and training consumed almost all of his time now.'

came renewed speculation about his homecoming!

In 2015, it made no sense for him to be playing for Italy anymore, and Fabiano did indeed return home. First, to a short-term stay in California, before the family moved back to where the journey had all began for them, in Miami, and settling in St. Louis, where Fabiano has established a working rapport with the St. Louis Chess Club. 'I just wanted to come back at that point,' he said in an online interview for the *Deadspin* news site. 'The U.S. has always felt like home, so I wanted to come back, and it felt like after 10 years and more financial security – by the time I left Europe I was supporting myself and could live on my own – it was time to come back.'

Rustam Kasimdzhanov

That year, he also won the FIDE Grand Prix, and with it, a first appearance in the Candidates tournament. The US was also some distance from Lugano and Chuchelov, so the move also came with another change of trainer – now Fabiano was working with GM Rustam Kasimdzhanov. Almost immediately, it looked as if he was going to get an early crack at Carlsen with his performance at the Moscow Candidates tournament – but instead, there was a heart-breaking last round loss to Sergey Karjakin, and the Russian winning the right to challenge Carlsen – but he believed, as many others did, that his time would surely come. Not to be deterred, there was also a couple of major victories through 2016 that kept the very patriotic, Stars and Stripes-waving US fans happy: his first US Championship title and leading the USA to team gold at the Baku Olympiad.

The next year, 2017, proved to be more of a challenge. There was nothing out of the ordinary, nothing special, but then again, no great disasters either. Even 2018 started with what was perceived as a setback, with a poor showing at Wijk aan Zee – but Fabiano was nonplussed, as he'd been focusing all his attention and energy to formulating a winning game-plan with Kasimdzhanov for the Berlin Candidates. And when Berlin came, he didn't just realize his life-long dream of playing in a World Championship match, he did so with more than just a touch of élan, with a resounding victory. He was now the first American-born player since Bobby Fischer to vie for the title.

And if Carlsen wasn't by now thinking that he had a very serious, not to mention determined challenger on his hands, then the coming months must have given him something further to worry about, as Fabiano continued to turn in a series of even more stellar performances. After Berlin, a trip down the *autobahn* to Baden-Baden, where Fabiano, by now brimming with confidence, consigned an increasingly concerned Carlsen into second place, as he won the Grenke Chess Classic. And the champion wasn't even safe on his home-turf, as Fabiano also took clear first at the Norway Chess tournament, despite losing to Carlsen in the opening round. In August, he jointly won the Sinquefield Cup with Carlsen and Levon Aronian, and beat Wesley So in a playoff to reach the London Grand Chess Tour final in December.

And there was no stopping Caruana through late September and early October, as he led the USA to the defence of their Olympiad title in Batumi. Although China pipped the US to the gold medal, Caruana's assured top board performance edged him ever-closer to *numero uno* Carlsen in the world rankings, with the rating gap between the two title-rivals shrinking to just 7 points.

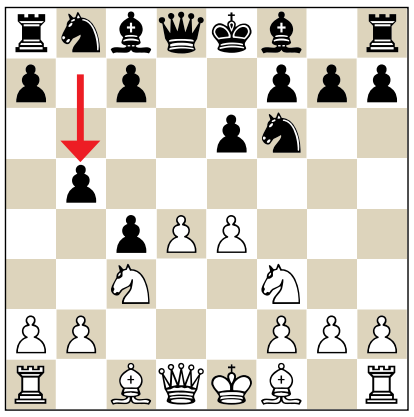
Now, as the calendar moves inexorably into November, this determined and confident young Miami-born, Brooklyn-raised title challenger of Italian ancestry could well have come to the final part of his long chess journey – a journey to dethrone Carlsen and knocking him off his coveted world No. 1 spot. ■

NEW IN CHESS

Although Rustam Kasimdzhanov played for Uzbekistan at the Batumi Olympiad, he spent a lot of time with Fabiano Caruana and always had some last words of encouragement and advice for America's first board.

A 'Fab' surprise

Jeroen Bosch



5...b5!?

'This is a fairly novel system that has slowly moved up the Elo-echelons.'

So far, 2018 has been a 'Fab year' for Fabiano Caruana. The American has been very successful in all his classical tournaments (with the notable exception of Wijk aan Zee), and because of his victory in the Berlin Candidates he is now entitled to play a much anticipated match with the World Champion.

Caruana is an eclectic opening expert who feels comfortable in a wide array of opening variations, although he usually goes for the main lines. In Round 3 of the Sinquefield Cup, he adopted a fairly novel system in the Queen's Gambit. With his stamp of approval, it deserves SOS scrutiny.

Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Fabiano Caruana
St. Louis 2018 (3)

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 dxc4

A common way to reach the highly theoretical Vienna Variation. With his next move Mamedyarov stresses that he is up to the job.

5.e4

We will concentrate on 5.e4 in this article, but briefly mention the most important alternatives:

■ After 5.♗g5 you can enter the Vienna Variation with 5...♗b4 6.e4 c5, or go for the even sharper Botvinnik Variation with 5...c6 6.e4 b5. However, if you are tempted to take up the present SOS line, I would advise you to play 5...a6!? 6.e4 b5, which transposes to 6.♗g5 below (the note to 6.e5).

■ Another point of Black's move order is that, compared to the regular Queen's Gambit Accepted, White has already developed his knight to c3, which means that Black equalizes rather easily after 5.e3 a6 6.♗xc4 b5 7.♗e2 (7.♗b3 ♗b7 8.0-0 c5; 7.♗d3 ♗b7 8.0-0 c5) 7...♗b7 8.0-0 ♘bd7, as in Nikolic-Carlsen, Berlin 2015, for example. And 6.a4 c5 7.♗xc4 ♘c6 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.♕e2 cxd4 10.♖d1 e5! 11.exd4 exd4 12.♘xd4 ♘xd4 13.♕e5 ♕d6! is another well-known equalizer. This was, for instance, the course of play in Eljanov-Caruana, Douglas 2016.

5...b5!?

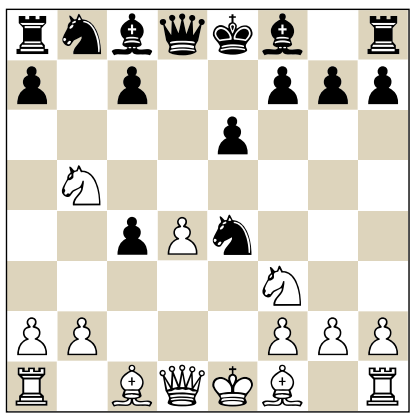
This is the reason why we are covering this game in this column! Rather than go for the Vienna Variation with 5...♗b4 (as Caruana did twice this year versus Aronian, beating him with Black in the Candidates), the American defends the pawn he has just taken, aiming to trade his b-pawn for White's e-pawn. This is a fairly novel system that has slowly moved up the Elo-echelons. First, the 2500+ grandmasters Del Rio, Peralta and Mastrovasilis started playing 5...b5. Later it was adopted by 2600+ GMs Mareco, Volokitin and Grandelius. Next came the 2700+ category. Grischuk played it in a blitz game at the end of 2017, and then Wojtaszek and Duda adopted it

in 2018. And now Caruana is responsible for its introduction at 2800-level. The idea of playing ...b5 is actually known from a few other lines. Think of the topical Queen's Gambit line 1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 ♘bd7 5.♗f4 dxc4 6.e3 b5!?. It is perhaps useful to note that our subject may also be reached via the Queen's Gambit Accepted: 1.d4 d5 2.c4 dxc4 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 e6!? 5.e4 b5. In this line, 4...a6 5.e4 b5 6.e5 ♘d5 7.a4 e6 8.axb5 ♘b6!? was a favourite of Tony Miles, and the play actually reminds me a lot of the positions we will encounter below.

6.e5

The most logical response. White retrieves his gambit pawn 'for free'.

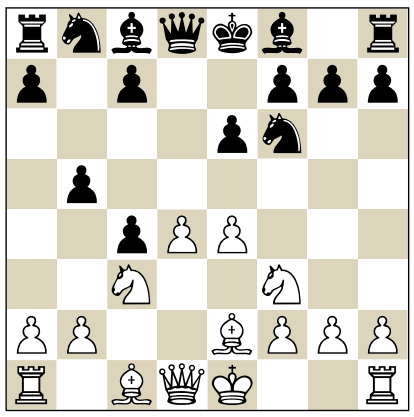
■ Indeed, 6.♘xb5 ♘xe4 ought to be comfortable for Black, and this is borne out by (the as yet rather limited) practice.



Now 7.♗xc4 is met by 7...♗b4+!, while the tricky 7.♕a4!? c6 (stronger than 7...♘c6 8.♘c3 ♘xc3 9.bxc3 ♗d7 10.♕xc4) 8.♘c3 (8.♘a3 c3!) 8...♘d6 looks fairly balanced. The time that it will take White to retrieve c4 (without giving up his light-squared bishop) will allow Black to complete his development.

Normal, therefore, is 7.♘c3 ♘d6!, when 8.♗xc4?! ♘xc4 9.♕a4+ ♘d7 (even stronger were the alternatives 9...♕d7 10.♕xc4 ♗a6 11.♕b3 ♘c6 and 9...c6 10.♕xc4 ♗a6; in both cases White has severe problems with his king and his light squares) 10.♕xc4 ♗b7 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗xe7 ♕xe7 13.♕xc7 ♗xf3 14.gxf3 0-0 gave Black excellent compensation for the pawn in the blitz game Le Quang Liem-Grischuk, Huaian 2017. Instead of taking the pawn with 8.♗xc4, 8.♗e2 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘e5 ♗b7 11.♘xc4 ♘xc4 12.♗xc4 ♘c6! (12...♘d7=) 13.♗e3 ♗f6 was a tad better for Black already in Szustakowski-Schnider, Graz 2018.

■ There are many reasons why the modest 6.♗e2 is not a good idea:



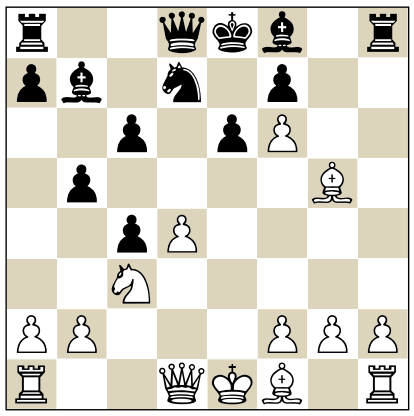
– 6...a6 is an innocent line from the Queen's Gambit Accepted.

– 6...♗a6 is also fine for Black.

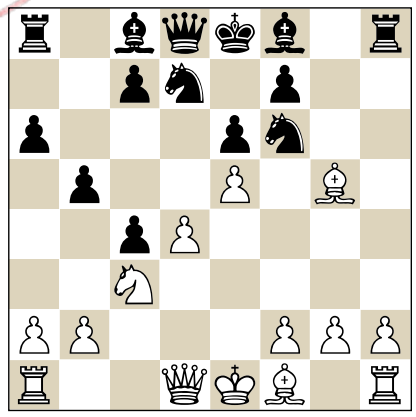
– 6...c6 is a line from the Geller Gambit in the Slav.

– 6...b4 7.♘a4 (7.e5!? ♘d5 8.♘e4 ♘b6) 7...♘xe4 8.♗xc4, and now, rather than 8...c6?! as in Sorm-Mager, Hofheim 2015, Black should realize that d4-d5 is not a threat. For example 8...♗e7 9.d5? ♗b7!.

■ While 6.♗g5 has been played quite a few times (with superior results for Black), it is actually not difficult to see why this should make the second player happy. White's 'naive' idea is that the play will transpose to the Botvinnik Variation after 6...c6 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♘bd7 11.exf6 ♗b7.



However, after 6...a6! the same 'forced' line sees Black emerge with a powerful bishop on the long diagonal that is not obstructed by a pawn on c6!: 7.e5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♘xg5 hxg5 10.♗xg5 ♘bd7



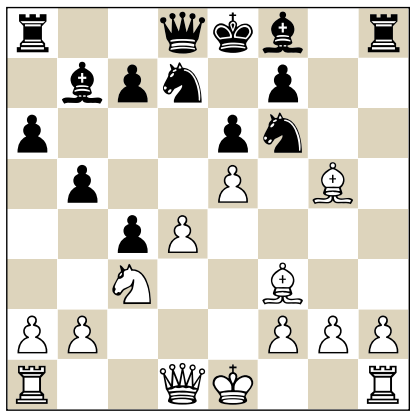
11.exf6 ♗b7. Compared to the Botvinnik Variation, Black has a pawn on a6 instead of on c6. This favours Black enormously, unless White can now favourably execute d4-d5. Let's check: 12.d5 ♘c5 13.dxe6 ♘xe6 but fortunately Black is doing great here (just look at that bishop on b7!).

Two practical examples:

– 14.♕xd8+ ♖xd8 15.♗e3 ♘d4 16.0-0-0 ♘f5 17.♗d2 ♗h6, and Black has strong pressure. In the game Kornev-Frolyanov, Moscow 2011, White now blundered into 18.f4? ♖xd2!.

– 14.♕e2 ♕d6 (14...♗c5! 15.♖d1 ♗d4) 15.♖d1 ♕c5 16.h4 ♗d6 17.♗e3?! ♕f5 18.g4 ♕h7 19.♖h3 0-0-0 and with ...♘f4 or simply ...♖he8 in the air Black was winning in Unuk-Kanmazalp, Graz 2018.

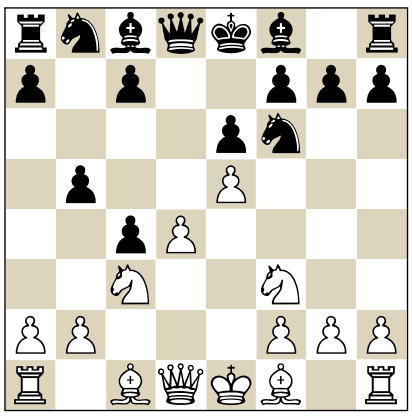
An alternative to 11.exf6 is 11.♗e2 (to exploit the absence of a pawn on c6). However, the tactics favour Black after 11...♗b7 12.♗f3



12...♘xe5! (12...♕b8 13.exf6 c5 14.d5 ♘e5 15.♕e2? – 15.♗e4 – 15...b4 favours Black, Ranaldi-Moroni, Monte-

video 2017) 13.♗xb7 (Black has a superior position following 13.dxe5 ♕xd1+ 14.♖xd1 ♗xf3 15.♗xf6 – 15.gxf3 ♘d7 – 15...♗xg2) 13...♘d3+ 14.♔f1 ♗h6! 15.♗xf6 ♕xf6 16.♘e4 ♕xd4 17.♗xa8 0-0, when Black is a rook down, with huge compensation. Re-establishing material parity seems more or less forced. Thus, after 18.♕f3 ♕xb2 19.♘f6+ ♔g7 20.♘h5+ ♔g6 21.♖d1 ♖xa8 22.g4 ♕d4, Black had the better game and eventually won in Vostrotin-Glazman, ICCF email 2006.

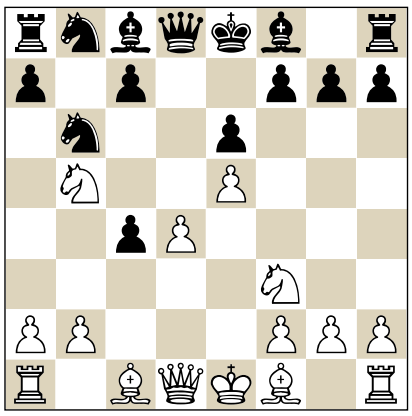
As an afterthought, if the above is too sharp for your taste, then also good is 11...♗h6 12.♗xh6 ♖xh6 13.exf6 ♕xf6, as in Kokje-Ernst, Groningen 2017.



6...♘d5 7.♘xb5

Here 7.a4!? c6 is a direct transposition to the Geller Gambit in the Slav Defence. Instead of 7...c6, 7...b4!? 8.♘e4 ♗a6 looks more than decent for Black and hasn't been tried so far!

7...♘b6



Black makes yet another move with his king's knight, which has now galloped along the same route as the Alekhine-knight. However, by comparison, White's centre is a lot less impressive than in the Alekhine, mainly because pawn c4 is black!

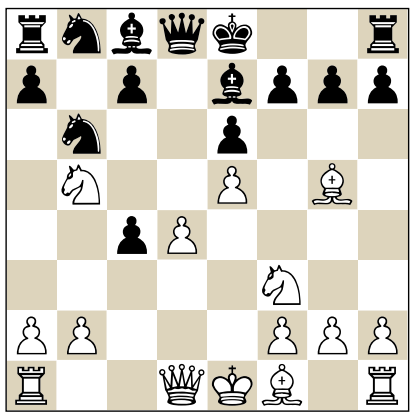
8.♗e2

White prepares castling.

Here, 8.♘c3 ♘c6 9.♗e2 ♗e7 (9...♗b4!?) 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗e3 transposes to the main game. And 11.♕d2 ♗b7 12.♖d1 ♘b4! was about even in Pashikian-Grandelius, Batumi 2018.

The fianchetto 8.g3 should be met by the normal developing moves 8...♗b7 9.♗g2 ♗e7 10.0-0 0-0.

The active 8.♗g5 seems to help Black. As Robert Ris explained in his Survey in Yearbook 124 (2017), Black doesn't actually mind trading the dark-squared bishops, since this will give him breathing room for his other pieces. After 8...♗e7



– 9.♗xe7 ♕xe7 10.♘c3 (note 10.♘a3?! c3!) 10...0-0 11.♗e2 ♖d8 12.♕c2 ♗b7 13.0-0 ♘c6! 14.♖ad1 ♘b4 15.♕c1 ♖ab8 Black was already slightly better in Sammalvuo-Grandelius, Puhajarve 2017.

– 9.♕d2 ♘c6 (again the knight is best-placed on c6) 10.♖c1 ♗a6 11.♗xe7 ♕xe7 (11...♘xe7?! 12.♘a3!) 12.a4 (but now 12.♘a3 is met by 12...♘b4!) 12...♘xa4 13.♗xc4, Stupak-Cornette, Rochefort 2017. And here, rather than 13...♖b8 14.b3!, Ris indicates 13...0-0, which seems alright for Black.

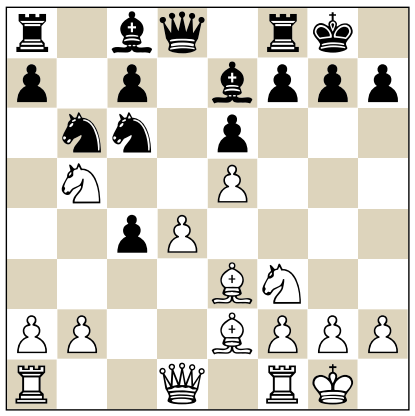
8...♘c6

Equally good is 8...♗e7, when after 9.0-0 ♘c6 10.♗e3 we have transposed to the main line.

9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♗e3

After 10.♘a3 Black is more or less forced to play 10...♗xa3! 11.bxa3 (true, he has lost a bunch of dark squares, but the light ones are his) 11...0-0 12.♗e3 ♗b7 13.♖c1 ♕d5 14.♕c2 ♘e7 15.♖fd1 ♖ab8, which was equal in Quintiliano-Pichot, Montevideo 2018. In the 10th round of the Batumi Olympiad Ding Liren played 10.♕d2 0-0 11.♕f4!? vs Duda.

10...0-0



This is the main tabiya of this novel line. White has tried many different moves, but no convincing path towards an opening edge has been found so far.

11.♘c3!?

White retreats of his own accord.

Let's start with a few minor options:

– Black had very decent play after 11.a3?! ♘a5! 12.♕c2 ♗b7 13.♖ad1 ♕d7 14.♘c3 ♕c6, Anton-Del Rio, Linares 2015.

– Black was very active after 11.a4?! ♗a6 12.♖c1 ♘b4 13.♘d2 c6 14.♘c3 ♖b8 15.a5 ♘6d5 16.♘xc4 c5!, Babula-Plischki, Teplice 2017.

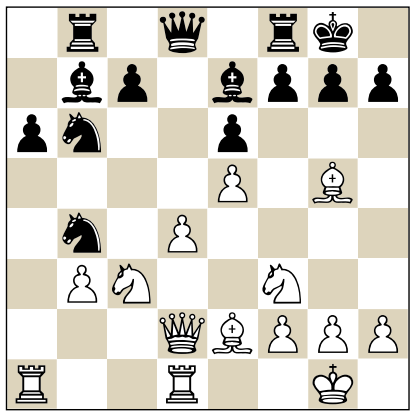
– White cannot transfer the queen to the kingside, because of 11.♕c2?! ♘b4 12.♕e4 ♕d5! and the queens are traded, Wichmann-Pötsch, Leipzig 2018.

– 11.♘d2 ♗a6 (11...a6 12.♘c3 ♘xd4 – Ris – is also fine) 12.a4 ♗xb5 (White is certainly not better after 12...♘a5) 13.axb5 ♘xd4 14.♘xc4 was Nihal-Del Rio, Port de Pollenca 2016, and although Black may not have played the most accurate moves, he can still keep things equal by means of 14...♘f5 (Ris).

The three major set-ups in the diagrammed position above are: the centralizing 11.♕d2, followed by ♖fd1, and 11.♕c1, followed by ♖fd1, and 11.♖c1 (concentrating on pawn c4).

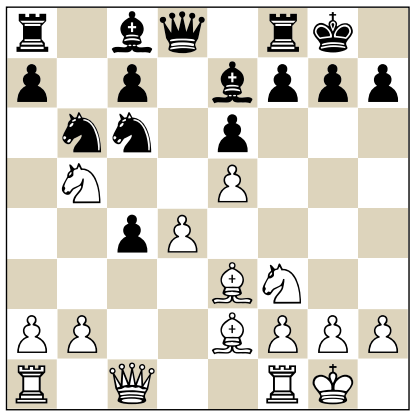
■ 11.♕d2 ♖b8 12.♖fd1 ♗b7 (12...♘b4 13.b3 a6 14.♘c3 cxb3 15.axb3 was

Deac-Volokitin, Calimanesti Caciulata 2016, and now 15...♘6d5 is equal, while 15...♗b7 is also fine, since it transposes to Wojtaszek-Duda) 13.b3 a6 14.♘c3 cxb3 15.axb3 ♘b4 16.♗g5



16...♘d7! (preparing ...c5 – don't fall for the 'automatic' 16...h6?, when White obtains a huge attack after 17.♗xh6! gxh6 18.♕xh6 – the big threat is 19.d5, followed by ♖d4, and 18...♘6d5 is met by 19.♘e4) 17.♕f4 c5 18.♖ac1 cxd4 19.♗xe7 ♕xe7 20.♖xd4, with at least equal chances for Black in Wojtaszek-Duda, Warsaw 2018.

■ 11.♕c1!?, vacating square d1 for the rook and aiming to win the c-pawn (sometimes by means of b3):



– 11...♗a6 12.♘c3, and now Black should avoid 12...♗b7?! (correct is 12...♘b4) 13.♖d1 ♖b8? (13...♘b4) 14.d5!±, Wang Yue-Mareco, Baku 2016.

– White was unable to prove an edge after 11...♖b8 12.♘c3 (winning the pawn is bad: 12.♗xc4 ♘xc4 13.♕xc4 ♗a6; and 12.b3 a6! 13.♘c3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♘b4 should be equal) 12...♘b4 13.♖d1 ♗b7 14.b3 cxb3 15.axb3 a6, Real-Flores, Buenos Aires 2017.

– Pretty good looks 11...♘b4!? 12.♘a3 (worse is 12.♗xc4 ♘xc4 13.♕xc4 ♗a6! 14.♗d2 ♕d5!) 12...♘d3 13.♕c2 ♗xa3 14.bxa3 ♗a6.

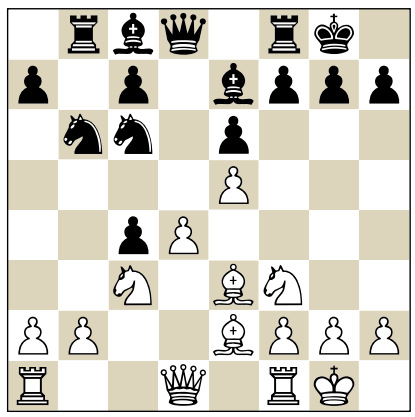
■ After 11.♖c1 I like 11...♖b8!? best, when 12.♘c3 (12.♗xc4? ♘xc4 13.♖xc4 ♘a5–+; 12.b3 a6! 13.♘c3 cxb3 14.axb3 ♘b4; 12.♘a3!? ♗xa3 13.bxa3 ♗b7 14.♗xc4 ♘xc4 15.♖xc4 ♘e7) 12...♗a6 (12...♘b4!) 13.♕d2 (13.b3!) 13...♘b4 14.♖fd1 ♘d3 15.♖b1 ♘d5 16.♘xd5 was Zoler-Gorodetzky, Israel 2018. Now, rather than 16...exd5, Black should take back with the queen: 16...♕xd5 17.b3 ♘b4!.

11...♖b8

The first new move of the game. Previously Black had played 11...♗b7, when it looks as if White has chances to preserve a slight plus:

– 12.a3 ♘a5 13.♕c2 ♘d5 14.♖ad1 ♖b8 15.♗d2 c6?! (15...♘b6!) 16.♘e4 h6 17.♗xa5 was agreed drawn, but surely White is slightly better here, Lalic-Boruchovsky, Pardubice 2018.

– 12.♘a4 ♘a5 13.♗d2 (13.♘c5!? ♗d5 14.♕c2 ♘d7 15.♖fd1) 13...♗c6 14.♗xa5 ♗xa4 15.♕d2, Sjugirov-Grachev, Sochi 2017, looks balanced after 15...♗c6.



12.a3 This prevents ...♘b4, but there are many other playable moves, like 12.♕c1, 12.♕d2, 12.♖c1 and 12.b3. Play is similar to the options we investigated on move 11.

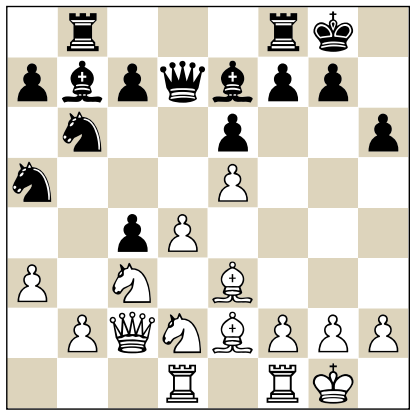
12...♗b7

If White has played a3, it becomes even more attractive to play 12...♘a5, which not only 'over-protects' pawn c4, but also eyes the b3-square.

13.♕c2 ♘a5 14.♖ad1!?

Mamedyarov has aggressive intentions (f2-f4). Otherwise it would be more logical to play 14.♖fd1.

14...h6 15.♘d2 ♕d7



The chances are about equal. Mamedyarov now executes his plan.

16.f4 ♘d5 17.♘xd5 ♗xd5 18.♕c3

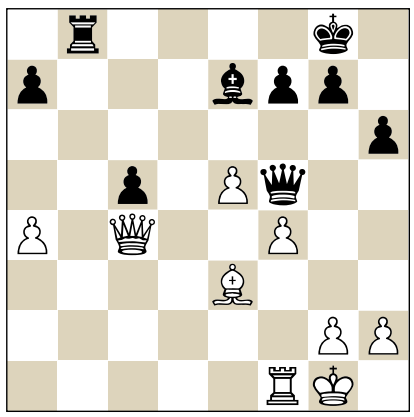
Black has good counterplay after the consistent 18.f5!? exf5 19.♖xf5 ♕e6! (19...♖xb2? 20.♕xb2 ♕xf5 21.♕b5!; 19...c5?! 20.dxc5 ♕c7 21.♘e4 ♗xe4 22.♕xe4 ♗xc5 23.e6!) 20.♖f2 c5.

18...♖b5!

Preparing to double rooks on the b-file.

19.♘xc4 ♘xc4 20.♗xc4 ♗xc4 21.♕xc4 ♖xb2 22.d5 exd5 23.♖xd5 ♕f5! 24.a4 24.♕xc7?? ♕e4!–+.

24...♖fb8 25.♖b5 c5 26.♖xb8+ ♖xb8



The position is completely equal now. Caruana created some chances but Mamedyarov held on to the draw, which was agreed on move 61.

In conclusion, 5...b5 is an exciting and fairly new way to spice up the Queen's Gambit and to stay away from the theoretical ramifications of the Vienna Variation. Do try this at home and in the tournament hall! ■

The Blitz Whisperer
Maxim Dlugy

What if the World Championship match is decided in blitz games?

Two years ago, in New York, Magnus Carlsen defended his title by winning the rapid tiebreaker. Traditionalists will shudder at the thought of blitz games deciding the world championship match in London. **MAXIM DLUGY** looks at the players' chances if that scenario becomes reality and has suggestions for how Fabiano Caruana, despite a whopping rating gap of 172(!) points, might beat the odds.

As the World Championship between Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana is around the corner, and the bookmakers' odds are only slightly in favour of the World Champion, there seems to be every reason to wonder what would happen if, after 12 classical games, we'd see a tiebreaker with a faster time-control. Whether there would be rapid games, as we saw in New York two years ago, when Magnus faced Sergey Karjakin, or whether we would even go to blitz games if the rapid games yield no decision either.

While Magnus Carlsen also excels in rapid and blitz chess, Fabiano Caruana's strength clearly lies in the classical time-control. Does this mean that Magnus has the pleasant option of just coasting to the tiebreaker, as he did against Karjakin once he had equalized the score with two games to go? Is the champ such a clear favourite in the faster time-controls that his challenger will have to steer clear of the tiebreak at all cost and put all his efforts into the first 12 games?

On the face of it – Yes! At the time of writing, the difference between the two players in the classical time-control is 12 rating points, while the difference in the rapid ratings is 91 points, and the gap in the blitz ratings even a whopping 172 points!

From my discussions with former World Champion Anatoly Karpov, who had the privilege of talking to Arpad Elo, the inventor of the current rating system, I learnt that the difference in ratings is just an indication of the expected score between players in the long run, and in no way an indication of a foregone conclusion. In fact, Prof. Elo was annoyed when FIDE decided to use his system to include and exclude players from certain events, merely on the basis of these numbers – he never meant it to be used that way.

Notwithstanding this, we live in a practical world, and it does seem to us that if a player is 170 points lower, he is the underdog, even if we shouldn't expect the top dog to automatically score 7½ points in a 10-game match, as predicted by the rating system. This doesn't bode well for Caruana, who it seems has shown serious weakness in playing blitz against the top players in the world. His recent 20½-6½ loss to Levon Aronian in the Chess.com championship created a sensation, while his struggling in the blitz part of the Grand Chess Tour has become the norm, rather than the exception.

Does that mean that Magnus only needs to tie the match, split the four rapid games and finish Fabiano off in the two-game blitz playoff? I don't think it will be that simple. First of all, as any odds player knows, the positive expectation of results plays out very well over the long haul, but in a short match, anything can happen. Even if Fabiano's expectation in a two-game blitz match is half a point out of 2, it's very easy to beat the odds, either

by catching your opponent with an opening novelty and winning one game or simply by managing to draw both games, which would take the match to a totally unpredictable Armageddon shoot-out. The nervous tension in those two blitz games would be as high as with a throw-in in the final seconds of a basketball game with the shooter's team down one point. Here, too, the ability to control your nerves will be the main factor.

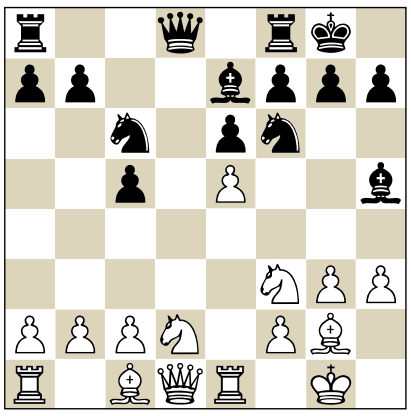
To showcase what can happen when time runs short, I would like to direct the reader to the following incredible game, which may hopefully demonstrate the kind of situation that could arise in the final countdown. This blitz game, played last year between Fabiano and Magnus in the Paris leg of the Grand Chess Tour, demonstrates how a lack of time can make the best players in the world come up with seemingly random moves.

LENNART OOTES

Paris, 2017. A nod, a quick handshake, another blitz game. Clearly, Magnus Carlsen and Fabiano Caruana have no idea of the blunderfest ahead of them.

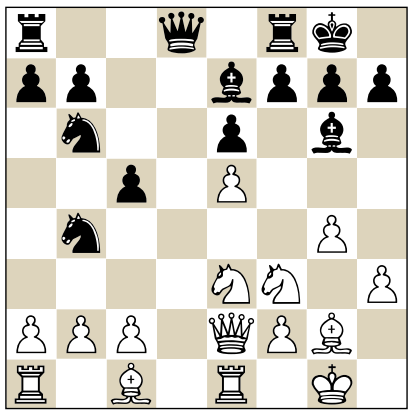
Fabiano Caruana
Magnus Carlsen
Paris blitz 2017

1.♘f3 d5 2.g3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 ♗g4 4.0-0 e6 5.d3 ♗e7 6.h3 ♗h5 7.♘bd2 c5 8.e4 ♘c6 9.♖e1 dxe4 10.dxe4 0-0 11.e5?!



A dubious decision, extending the scope of Black's light-squared bishop on the b1-h7 diagonal.

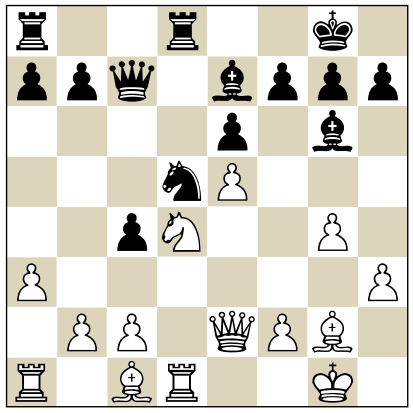
11...♘d7 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘c4 ♘b4 14.♘e3 ♘b6 15.♕e2



15...♘6d5

With more time on the clock, Magnus would probably have preferred a gradual improvement of his already comfortable position with 15...♕c7, with ideas of ...♘c6 and ...c4, when Black is already significantly better.

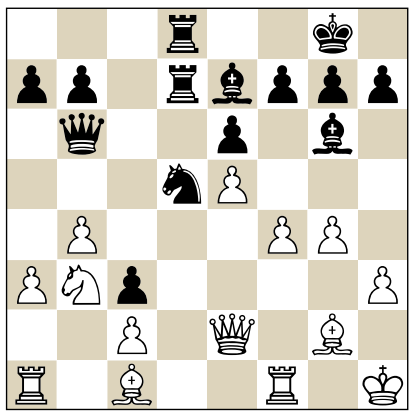
16.♖d1 ♕c7 17.♘xd5 ♘xd5 18.a3 c4 19.♘d4 ♖fd8



20.♔h1

It was better to simplify the position with 20.♘f5 exf5 21.♗xd5, since White's d4-knight has a smaller radius of action than its colleague on d5.

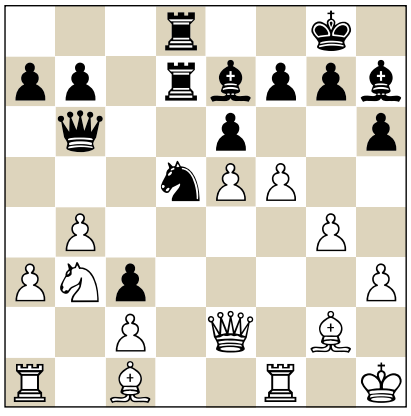
20...c3 21.b4 ♕b6 22.♘b3 ♖d7 23.f4 ♖ad8 24.♖f1



'The nervous tension would be as high as with a throw-in in the final seconds of a basketball game with the shooter's team down one point.'

Black has somehow lost momentum, because the pawn on c3, although strong in itself, is blocking Black's pieces from entering White's position. Time for some fun!

24...h6 25.f5 ♗h7

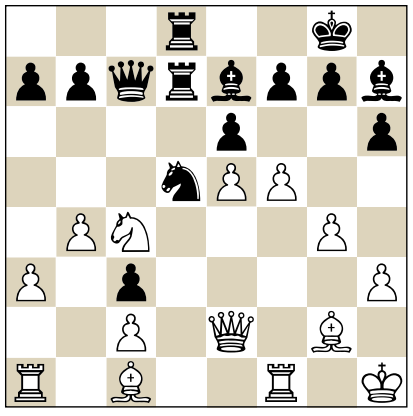


26.♘a5

The direct approach 26.f6 ♗f8 27.fxg7 ♗xg7 28.♘c5 ♖c7 29.♕f2 looked more promising, even though Black could arrange for counterplay by sacrificing the rook for the annoying knight with 29...♖dc8 30.♕h4 ♖xc5 31.bxc5 ♕xc5 32.♗xh6 ♗xc2, with an unclear position.

26...♕c7 27.♘c4

A strange move, since the knight doesn't really have anywhere to go to. Again, 27.f6 would have been better.



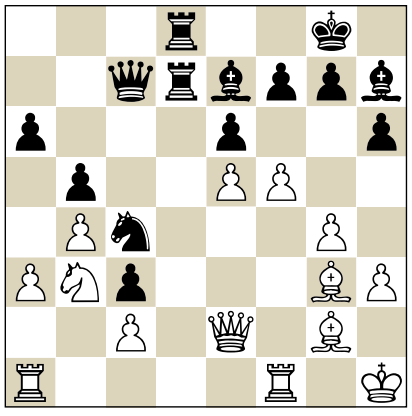
27...b5

Even stronger was 27...♖c8!, forcing White to withdraw the knight or to sacrifice a pawn by jumping to d6. Objectively, Black's advantage would be nearly decisive in that case.

28.♘a5 a6 29.♘b3 ♘b6 30.♗f4

It's not clear how exactly White wants to break through on the kingside, since Black's control of the d-file and of some key squares is extremely annoying.

30...♘c4 31.♗g3



31...♗g5?! Entering the dragon with 31...♘d2! was crushing. White cannot allow Black a passed pawn on d2, and must start giving away a serious amount of material.

32.♖f3 ♖d2

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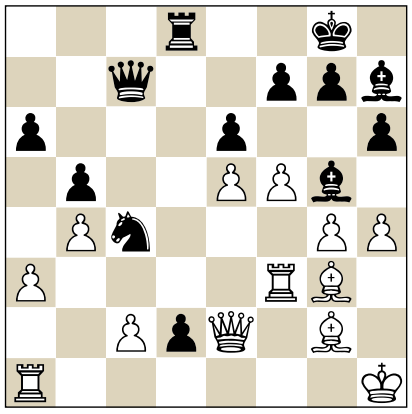
Nice, but not at all necessary. 32...♘d2 was still winning.

33.♘xd2 cxd2 34.h4



Now begins a series of the most incredible mistakes recorded in a game between two world top chess players.

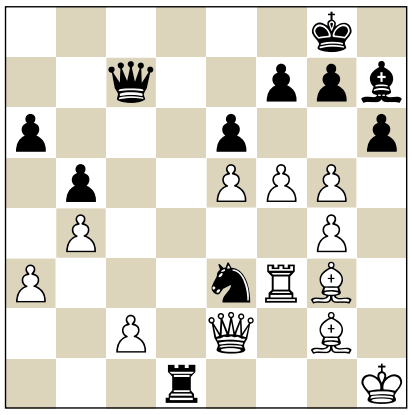
'Magnus once again plays a losing move in a winning position.'

Of course, it is a blitz game, but let's just see what happens before drawing our own conclusions.

34...♘e3?

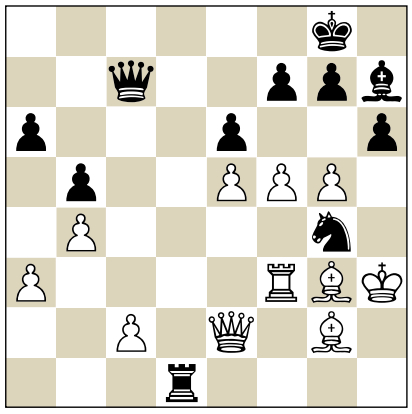
A losing move. After the best sequence 34...♗e3 35.♖d1 ♘b2 36.♖xe3 ♕xc2 37.♖xd2 ♖xd2 38.♕f3 ♕d1+ 39.♔h2 ♕xf3 40.♖xf3 exf5 41.gxf5 ♘c4 42.e6 ♗xf5! 43.exf7+ (43.♖xf5 ♖xg2+!) 43...♔f8 44.♖f2 ♖xf2 45.♗xf2 ♔xf7 the endgame should be a draw.

35.hxg5 d1♕+ 36.♖xd1 ♖xd1+



37.♔h2? Now it's White's turn to go wrong. After 37.♗e1! Black's knight cannot keep defending the rook on d1, and White collects an exchange with a winning position.

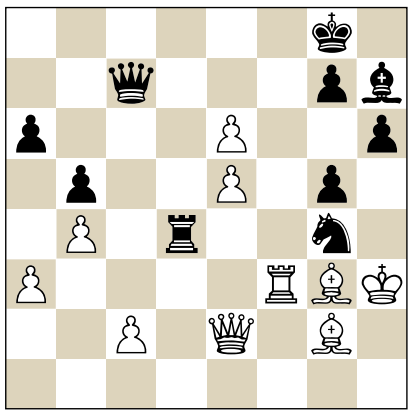
37...♘xg4+ 38.♔h3



38...♖d4?

This logical-looking move, guarding the knight on g4, is a losing mistake. Black could have kept the balance with the incisive 38...♕d7!! 39.g6 fxg6. Now the position is completely crazy, because Black has three viable options: ...g5, ...♖d2 and ...gxf5, all leading to roughly level positions. For example: 40.♔xg4 g5 41.♗f2!! ♗xf5+ 42.♔g3 ♖d2 43.♕e1 ♖xc2 44.♔h2.

39.g6 fxg6 40.fxe6 g5



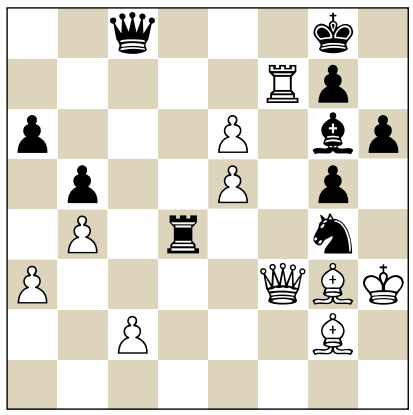
41.♖f7 The unlikely 40.c3! was even stronger, overloading the rook on d4, but Fabi's move is also quite strong. Now we see that White needs to get rid of Black's defending knight on g4 as quickly as possible.

41...♕c8 But here White played:

42.♕f3?? This move turns a winning position into a losing one and deserves two question marks. The only winning move, and a logical one, was 42.♖d7! ♖xd7 43.exd7 ♕xd7 44.e6, winning the knight on g4.

42...♗g6??

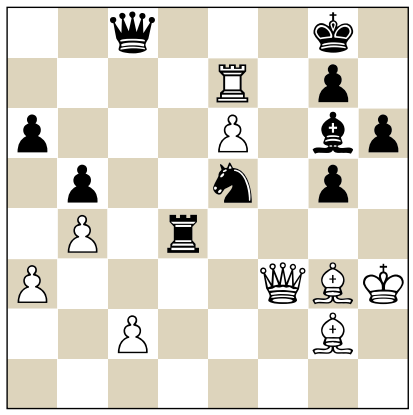
Black's logical-looking reply is also a losing blunder, turning a win into a loss. Instead, Black should have given his king breathing room with a tempo as follows: 42...♗e4 43.♕b3 ♗xg2+ 44.♔xg2 ♕c6+ 45.♕f3 ♕xe6, with a totally winning position.



43.♖e7?? The third double question mark in a row, returning the favour again. The winning concept 43.♖d7! ♖xd7 44.exd7 ♕xd7 is now demonstrated with 45.♕d5+ ♕xd5 46.♗xd5+, picking up the knight on g4.

43...♘xe5??

Magnus once again plays a losing move in a winning position. The correct idea was to finally protect the knight on g4 with 43...h5!, whereupon White's ♖d7 would no longer work.

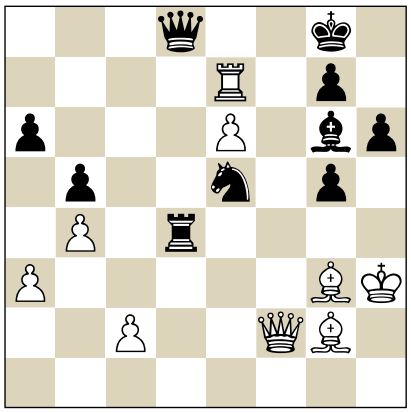


44.♕f2??

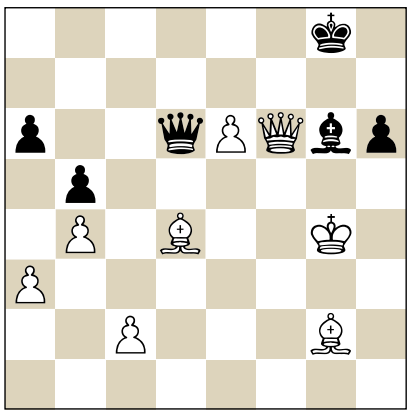
Fabiano is playing the same game. His winning combination now started with a queen sacrifice as follows: 44.♗xe5!! g4+ 45.♕xg4 ♖xg4 46.♖xg7+ ♔f8 47.e7+ ♔e8 48.♖g8+ ♔xe7 49.♖xc8 ♗f5 50.♖c5!, and Black is down a piece without a significant discovered check by the rook.

44...♕d8??

The final mistake in this incredible battle of nerves. Black plays another losing move instead of winning with 44...♕c3!! with the very unpleasant threat of 45...♖h4 mate. After 45.♗a8 ♖d2 it becomes pretty clear that White is simply lost.



45.♖xg7+! ♔xg7 46.♗xe5+ ♔g8 47.♗xd4 ♕d6 48.♕f6 g4+ 49.♔xg4



and the World Champion resigned.

You just witnessed a series of six(!) double blunders in a row from the two top players in the world. Added to this was a whole slew of other, lesser but still significant, mistakes that disfigured this game.

The big question arising from this is: Can a player train to avoid such mistakes in the key blitz and rapid games? As we know from Magnus' comments after his previous match with Sergey Karjakin, that's in a way precisely what he did in New York after Game 11, when the score was level and he was White in the only remaining classical game of the match. He planned to make a quick draw and concentrate all his energy on winning the rapid tiebreak. He turned out to be completely right with this highly practical decision, as Sergey, who had spent all his energy preparing for a real fight in Game 12, was left holding the bag when the tiebreaker rolled in.

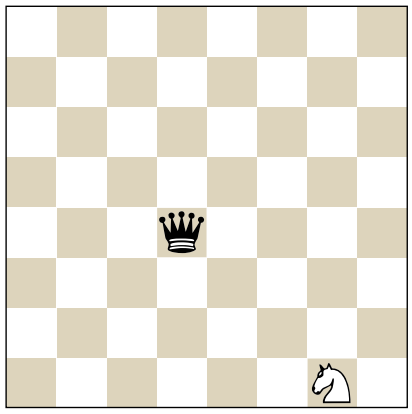
Which begs the question: How can one prepare for a blitz or rapid playoff? One simple answer is to play blitz and rapid (training) games against strong players, take note of where the mistakes come in and then work on that area of the game. A major issue, though, no matter what your weaknesses are, will always be speed. Speed is essential. In order to improve your speed, your hand-eye coordination has to be improved, and this can best be done by good drills.

When working on a player's thinking speed in my chess academy in New York, I give my students two drills, one of which they can practise on their own. The first drill is quite simple: You get five minutes to find as many double attacks as you can with a queen against two randomly placed knights, pressing the clock after each correct attack. Your coach then places the queen back on its original square and resets the clock. When the attacks run out, he changes the position and you go again, until the five minutes are up. I had seven-year-old kids go from 50 attacks to 246 attacks in five minutes over the course of this training. Their speed and overview of the board improved together with their rating.

'To improve your speed, your hand-eye coordination has to be improved, and this can best be done by good drills.'

Unfortunately, this drill can only be performed with a very strong coach who is able to quickly spot the double attacks himself, and set up positions in a split second in which at least one double attack is possible, to keep the momentum of the drill going.

The second drill was described by John Levitt in his excellent book *Genius in Chess*.



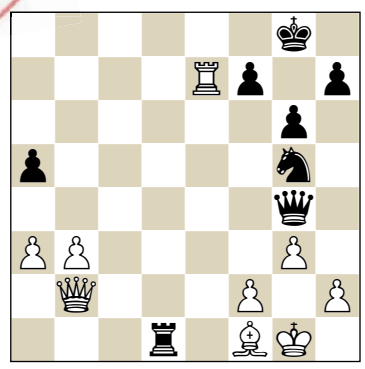
In this position, the task is to manoeuvre the knight to all squares not covered by the black queen in a sequence starting with c1, e1 and turning after reaching the edge. So after h1, the knight has to go to h2 and then g2. The final square is g8. Of course, you cannot capture the black queen or move to a square covered by it during your journey.

Time yourself and then work to improve your time once or twice a day. After a week you will see a marked improvement in your ability to make decisions and you will be less likely to miss a strong knight manoeuvre in your games!

My current best time is 1 minute and 24 seconds. I think it can be seriously improved. Of course, as you get bored with this position, you can put the queen on some other central square, and the position will become another tough drill to work out. Improvement in blitz is a result of hard work, just like improvement in chess or any other endeavour. If Fabiano focuses on this area of his game, he will be able to match Magnus in the tiebreaker and we will be seeing an extremely exciting match, no matter what the outcome. ■

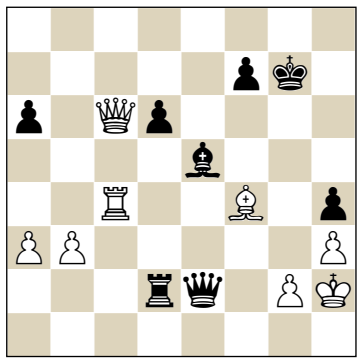
Solutions

from page 77



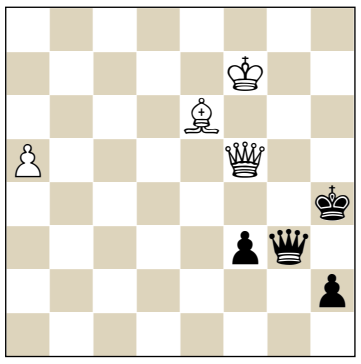
1. Seo-Westerberg
Ronneby 2018

This is not just about mate... **35...♘h3+ 36.♔g2 ♘f4+ 37.♔g1 ♖xf1+! 38.♔xf1 ♕h3+!** White resigned in view of 39.♔e1 ♘d3+.



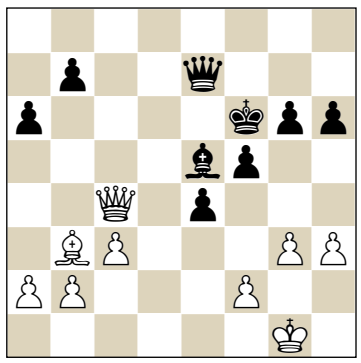
2. Howell-McShane
Hull 2018

31...♕e3! 32.♕e4 After 32.♗xe5+ ♕xe5+, ...♕e1-g3+ and ...♖d1 mates. **32...♕g3+!** White resigned on account of mate on d1.



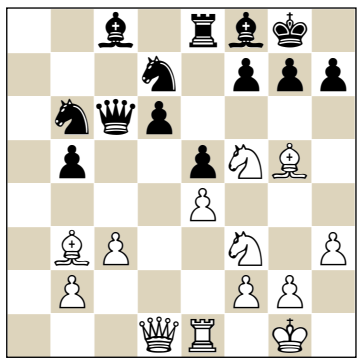
3. Solomon-Morris
Gold Coast 2018

70.♕h7+ brings White nothing, but the quiet **70.♔f6!**, threatening 71.♕h7 mate, wins, e.g. 70...♕g2 71.♕f4+ ♔h5 72.♗f7+.



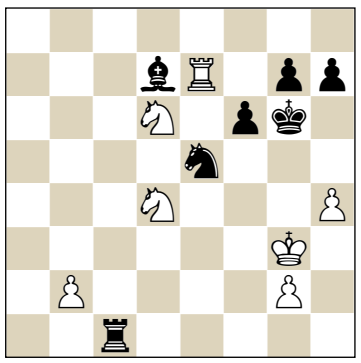
4. Morgunov-Froewis
Vienna 2018

39.f4! Now any bishop retreat loses to 40.♕d4+, but **39...exf3** clears the 4th rank for the white queen: **40.♕h4+** Either winning the queen or checkmating after 40...g5 41.♕xh6. Black resigned.



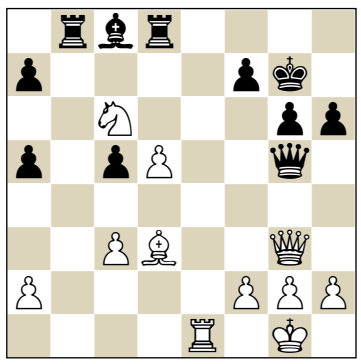
5. Andreikin-Tari
Helsingor 2018

23.♘3d4! exd4 24.♗xf7+! ♔xf7 25.♕h5+ ♔g8 If 25...g6 26.♕xh7+ ♔e6 27.♘xd4+ ♔e5 28.f4 mate. **26.♕xe8** Black resigned as he is helpless against the threats of ♘e7+, ♗e7 followed by ♘xd6, or even cxd4.



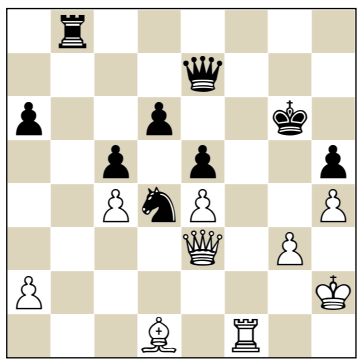
6. Sonis-Kindermann
Ortisei 2018

37.♘e2! ♖e1 38.♘f4+ ♔h6 39.♖xe5! and Black resigned in view of 39...♖xe5 40.♘f7 mate. If 37...♖f1, White wins with 38.♘f4+ ♔h6 39.♖xe5! ♖xf4! 40.♘f7+! ♔g6 41.♔xf4 ♔xf7 (41...fxe5+ 42.♘xe5+) 42.♖a5.



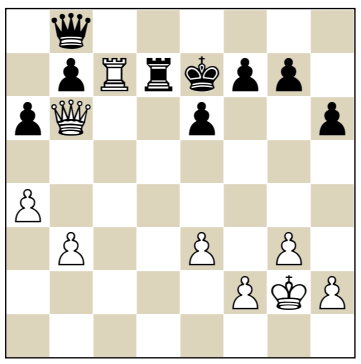
7. Arvola-Agdestein
Sarpsborg 2018

24...♖e8! 25.♖xe8 ♖b1+! Probably White considered only 25...♕c1+ 26.♗f1 ♗a6 27.♕e5+ when he is the first to give checkmate. **26.♗f1 ♖xf1+! 27.♔xf1 ♗a6+** And now White resigned.



8. Fedoseev-Vitiugov
Satka 2018

52.♗xh5+! ♔xh5 53.♖f7! ♔g4 53...♕xf7 54.♕g5 mate is the point; if 53...♖b2+ 54.♔h3 ♕e6+ 55.♖f5+! ♔g6 56.♕g5+ ♔h7 57.♕h5+ ♔g7 58.♕g4+ ♕g6 59.♖g5. **54.♖xe7 ♖b2+ 55.♔g1** Black resigned; he will win the queen but lose the ending.



9. Zhigalko-Dubiel
Bad Homburg 2018

29.♖xd7+ ♔xd7 30.♕d4+ is just an extra pawn, but **29.♕c5+ ♔d8 30.a5!!** is pure zugzwang! If 30...♖d any, 31.♕e7 mates; 30...♕xc7 31.♕f8 is also mate, and 30...♖xc7 loses the queen to 31.♕f8+. After exhausting his pawn moves, Black resigned.

A Golden Age

A golden age of chess books, that's what we live in. **MATTHEW SADLER** underscores his belief with star-spangled reviews of 'the best way for chess fans to get to know Challenger Fabiano Caruana', and 'a truly superb learning guide for club players'.

Some years ago, I reviewed a book of Boris Spassky's games (*Grand Strategy – 60 Games by Boris Spassky* by Jan van Reek and Boris Spassky). Somewhere in that review, I made the comment that Spassky was actually a very good player. That didn't quite come across how I meant it! It was meant as a reflection of the way that Bobby Fischer's victory over Spassky in 1972 had warped my view of Spassky. Always as the vanquished, rather than the astonishingly strong player who just came out second in one huge fight of an otherwise long and successful career.

This slip-up popped into my head when reading *Fabiano Caruana – His Amazing Story and His Most Instructive Chess Games* by Alexander Kalinin (New In Chess). I don't know about you, but I'm having trouble distinguishing between the top tournaments nowadays. The same players are always competing, and the results are similar too: X wins one with +1, Y wins another with +2 etc, Z wins the next with +1 together with Y. The effect of this is that you stop paying attention to the games too: a draw is the norm, if someone loses they must have played badly, so it's not worth looking at.

The Berlin Candidates was an awesome tournament, thrilling from start to finish, but I'd be hard pushed to identify a game from another top tournament in 2018. This jadedness with the top tournament circuit stops you sometimes from realising how amazingly strong the top players are nowadays! Seeing 62 of Caruana's best games together in one volume was a good reminder of the level of these guys and (hopefully!) the treat we have in store when he takes on Magnus Carlsen in November for the World Championship in London.

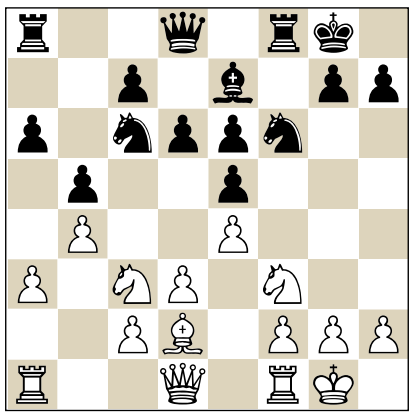
The author is Alexander Kalinin, a Russian grandmaster and trainer, whose *Chess Training for Candidate Masters* (New In Chess) I reviewed favourably a little while back. This book originally appeared in Russia and has been updated for this English-language edition. It is extremely current, featuring a game from the Stavanger tournament in May 2018! The first section of the book traces Caruana's progress starting from his first victory against a GM in 2002 (at the age of 10!). The second part of the book is a thematic treatment of Caruana's play, organising his games into eight separate themes such as 'Attacking the enemy king', 'Playing on two flanks', and 'The Berlin endgame'. As far as I can see, this is the first book of Caruana's games (well, he is only 26!).

With 62 games presented in 202 pages, each game is annotated in about 3 pages. The annotations are at a good level for the club player: not too many variations, some background on the openings used and a fair amount of explanation throughout the game. Together with a liberal sprinkling of diagrams (normally four or five per game) this makes it the type of book that's easy to read on the train without a board.

A good example of Kalinin's style of annotation is the very impressive game Caruana-Aronian, St. Louis 2014, which appears in the chapter 'Playing on two flanks'. I present some key extracts here:

Fabiano Caruana
Levon Aronian
St. Louis 2014 (4)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.d3 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.♘c3 d6 9.a3 ♘a5 10.♗a2 ♗e6 11.♗xe6 fxe6 12.b4 ♘c6 13.♗d2



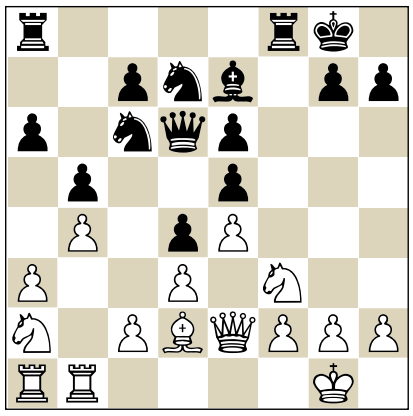
The position looks absolutely equal. In addition, the pawn's having moved from f7 to e6 looks favourable for Black, as he controls the squares d5 and f5 and has the open f-file for his rooks.

Even so, things are not quite so simple, because of the differing prospects of the bishops remaining on the board. Whereas the black bishop is currently passive, its white colleague harmonises splendidly with the pawn trio c2/d3/e4 and is ready to support operations on the queenside, involving the advance a3-a4.

13...d5 14.♖e1 ♕d6 15.♘a2

Caruana's original text move is associated with the idea of transferring the knight via c1 to b3. If this plan succeeds, then the black queenside weaknesses on a5 and c5 will be fixed.

15...♘d7 16.♕e2 d4 17.♖eb1

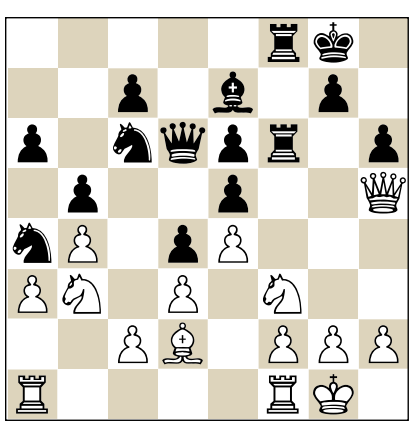


Preventing the freeing advance ...a6-a5 and preparing the manoeuvre ♘a2-c1-b3. The subtlety of having the king's rook on b1 is demonstrated in the variation 17...♖fb8 18.♕e1 and the move ...a6-a5 is again 'frozen'.

17...♘b6 18.♘c1 ♘a4 19.♘b3 ♖f7 20.♖c1 ♖d8 21.♘g5

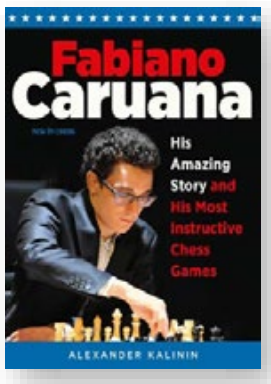
Switching attention to the kingside. Now it is clear that the ♗d2 directs play over the whole board.

21...♖f6 22.♕h5 h6 23.♘f3 ♖df8 24.♖f1



The appearance of the queen on h5 allows the enemy pieces to be restricted

Fabiano Caruana
by Alexander Kalinin
New In Chess, 2018
★★★★☆

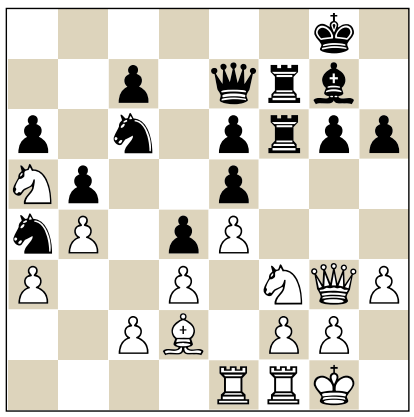


to the maximum (the ♘c6 is tied to the defence of the e5-pawn and ♘a4 needs to guard the squares c3 and c5).

24...♖8f7 25.♖ae1 ♗f8 26.h3

This 'little' move has great consequences – the threat of ♘f3-h2-g4 hangs over Black.

26...g6 27.♕h4 ♕e7 28.♕g3 ♗g7 29.♘a5



A spectacular widening of the front. All the black weaknesses are attacked. A slower building of the pressure, as both players showed, would have achieved nothing: 29.♘h2 ♖f8 30.♘g4 ♖f4 31.♗xf4 exf4 32.♕f3 e5 and in this closed position, White's extra exchange is not of great significance.

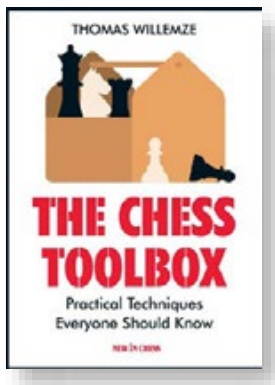
29...♘xa5 30.♘xe5

This positional sacrifice is the point of White's idea.

30...♘b7 31.♘xg6

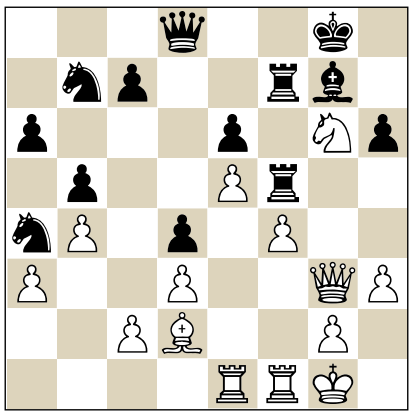
The relative strength of the pieces in action! The stingy 31.♘xf7 ♕xf7 loses

The Chess Toolbox
by Thomas Willemze
New In Chess, 2018
★★★★★



all White's advantage.

31...♕d8 32.e5 ♖f5 33.f4



White has two pawns for the knight, and an attack with the kingside pawns. It is hard for Black to overcome the poor position of his pieces.

33...c5 34.♘h4 ♖h5 35.♘f3

This consolidating knight transfer to f3 is the last preparatory step before the advance of the white infantry.

35...♔h7

Hastening defeat. The most tenacious was 35...♕e8 but even in this case after 36.♕g6 ♖e7 37.♕xe8+ ♖xe8 38.bxc5 ♘bxc5 39.♘xd4 Black is in a bad way.

36.♕g4 ♖hf5 37.♘h4 Now White will have a material advantage as well.

37...♔h8 38.♘xf5 ♖xf5 39.♕g6 ♕e7 40.g4 ♖f8 41.f5 ♕e8 42.♕xe8 ♖xe8 43.f6 ♗f8 44.f7 ♖e7 45.♖f6 ♘b6 46.♗xh6 ♘d7 47.♖ef1 cxb4 48.axb4 ♗xh6 49.♖xh6+ ♔g7 50.♖h5 1-0.

'This jadedness with the top tournament circuit stops you sometimes from realising how amazingly strong the top players are nowadays!'

All-in-all, an interesting and well-written book. It's somewhere between 3 and 4 stars, but I'll give it 4 stars for the timing: it's the best way for chess fans to get to know the man who will try to end Magnus' reign in November!

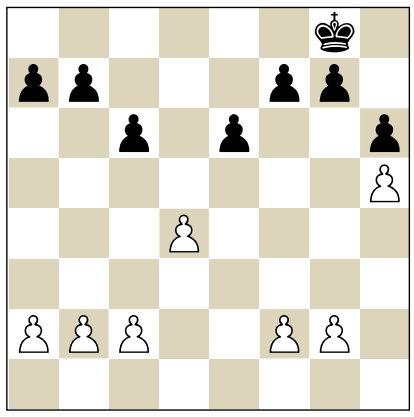
■ ■ ■

In an age where newspapers and books are steadily being abandoned for online news and streamed series, the chess book continues to thrive, in terms of quality if perhaps not always financially. I remarked a couple of years ago that we were in a golden age of chess books and that is still the case.

The nicest part of being a book reviewer in this period is that little gems can come from the most unexpected sources. Jimmy Adams' recent book on Breyer was one such volume (well OK, not so little!) and *The Chess Toolbox – Practical Techniques Everyone Should Know* by Thomas Willemze (New In Chess) is another. Just another Dutch IM writing a book you might say (well... that's what I thought when I saw it), but in fact it's a truly superb learning guide for club players. The book doesn't teach the complete set of skills you'll need to play chess well, but it offers a lucid and engaging introduction to a set of tactical and strategical motifs that the author – a professional trainer and a former National Youth Coach of the Dutch Chess Federation – considers most important for the amateur player: a toolbox, just like the title says.

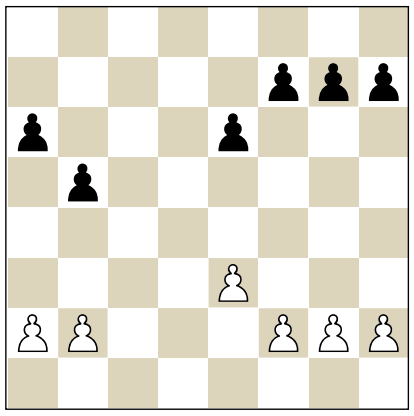
Specific tactical mechanisms include the 'Greek Gift' and 'Lasker's Double Bishop Sacrifice', while general strategic ideas such as exchanging pieces, unleashing your rooks (for example, occupying the 7th rank and conquering the open file) and attack and defence are dealt with in depth. A particularly nice feature of the book is the care Willemze takes to present both sides of the typical positions he analyses. For example, there is a chapter 'Winning with the IQP' and there is a chapter 'Fighting the IQP', discussing key strategies for both sides. Each chapter concludes with a set of exercises and – very innovatively – flash cards summarising the key lessons from each chapter.

Fresh from having read two opening books on the Caro-Kann (see further on), a chapter I particularly enjoyed was 'Fighting for the entrance square'. In this 23-page chapter, Willemze describes and demonstrates the concept of the destructive sacrifice – sacrificing material to get access to the opponent's king – using this typical Main Line Caro-Kann structure in which Black has castled kingside.



Main Line Caro-Kann Structure

Willemze demonstrates all the possible sacrifices: ♘e5xf7, ♘e5-g6, ♗d2xh6, ♘f5xg7, and ♖e1xe6... sometimes combining three of them! And at the end of the chapter, he looks from the opposite side and shows some examples in which Black (could have) survived. I like this way of studying very much. One of the things that helped me move from struggling IM to GM was when I started analysing middlegame positions arising from my openings in detail, pulling out themes such as the one above, and then analysing the positions as deeply as I could. I would try to find resources to inject tension in dull-looking positions, unearth ways of generating unexpected attacks and discover which positions offered surprising defensive possibilities and then try to understand the specific conditions required for such ideas to work. In that way, I managed to turn my main defence against 1.d4 – the Queen's Gambit Accepted – into a good winning weapon once weeks of deep analysis had shown to me that such boring symmetrical structures...



Queen's Gambit Accepted

... were replete with hidden tactical possibilities. Once you understand such nuances, you know exactly what you want from the opening and your general middlegame play improves too!

Another feature of the writing worth mentioning is how Willemze tries to weave together the themes discussed in the book. For example, in his treatment of IQP positions, he introduces the concept of the rook lift along the 3rd rank and refers to the lessons learnt in the sections based around 'Unleash your rooks'. In summary, a very instructive book and a pleasure to read. Definite 5 stars!

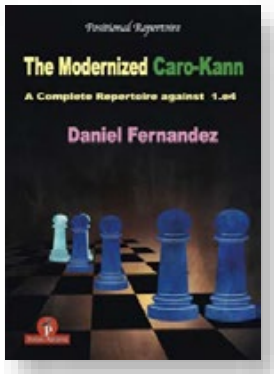
■ ■ ■

On to openings! *The Modernized Caro-Kann* (Thinkers Publishing) is the first book by the young English GM Daniel Fernandez. I did a little double-take when I saw a book about this opening by this author. Hadn't I had a game with him in the Caro-Kann at the Blackpool Congress in 2014 when he'd allowed the well-known trap 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘g5 h6 6.♘e6 ? I thought he'd looked surprised when it landed to be honest! However, a quick glance through the book showed that Fernandez dedicates 4 pages to 5...h6 as a not-so-bad surprise weapon, so maybe it was all

intentional! In any case, this book is a pretty impressive analytical work.

The repertory suggested is very broad against 3.e5, in which two separate lines are suggested against the Short System (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2 ♘e7 – the main recommendation – and 5...c5 broadly following Vidit's repertoire in a recent ChessBase DVD) while Fernandez also dedicates 17 pages to Khenkin's and Arkell's favourite 3...c5. The repertory against 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 is extremely narrow, favouring the unpopular 4...♘d7 (Karpov's and Speelman's favourite in the good old days). It's a brave choice! Since 2016, only 67 games have been played in this line by players averaging 2500.

The Modernized Caro-Kann
by Daniel Fernandez
Thinkers Publishing, 2018
★★★★☆



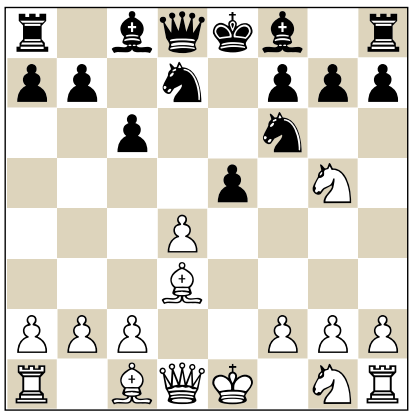
Bologan's Caro-Kann
by Victor Bologan
New In Chess, 2018
★★★☆☆

In other areas, the coverage is a little too narrow to give a Black player a complete set of lines. For example, in the main line position 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘g5 ♘gf6 6.♗d3 e6 7.♘1f3 ♗d6 8.♕e2 h6 9.♘e4 ♘xe4 10.♕xe4 ♕c7 11.♕g4 ♔f8 12.0-0 b6, Negi's 13.b3 (recommended in his Quality Chess series on 1.e4) is covered in extreme detail.

'A particularly nice feature of the book is the care Willemze takes to present both sides of the typical positions he analyses.'

Compare this to the 4..♗f5 line in which 380 games were played in the same period.

This book is something between a personal exploration of the opening and a repertoire book. For example, at certain stages of the lines, Fernandez does some detailed work on sidelines which I'd never seen before, 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 ♘d7 5.♘g5 ♘gf6 6.♗d3 e5



being one shocking example!
These would be ideal to broaden out a standard repertoire with some surprise weapons.

However, apart from the sideline 11.a4, no other White tries (of which there are many) are considered, which might make a starting Caro-Kann player nervous about playing this main line without additional support.

However, this little quibble aside, this is definitely a book you should get if you play the Caro-Kann as Black or 1.e4 as White. There are too many original ideas and tricky sidelines for either side to ignore! Recommended!

■ ■ ■

It's raining Caro-Kann books at the moment as *Bologan's Caro-Kann* (New In Chess) came through the letter-box at the same time as Fernandez' book.

There are two distinct types of Bologan opening books. There are the extremely innovative books such as *Bologan's Black Weapons* and *Bologan's Ruy Lopez for Black,* which are replete with unusual learning and memory aids and full of grandmaster knowledge about the positional themes and typical ideas in the opening. And then there are the more solid, traditional books such as *Bologan's King's Indian,* which work through an opening repertoire in conventional fashion.

Bologan's Caro-Kann is of the latter type. Bologan is a long-time Caro-Kann expert and has played the opening successfully at the very highest level, so it's interesting in general to see the lines he selects for a repertory book. When a long-time practical exponent recommends a variation, you can assume that it's probably best by test! Bologan covers all White possibilities in bite-size chapters – most of the 59 chapters are not longer than 4 pages – which does give you a lovely feeling of progress as you work your way through the book (I'd recommend this approach for future opening books – it really works well!).

There is a reasonable amount of overlap between Fernandez' book and this one – for example Bologan also chooses 5...♘e7 against the Short System (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.e5 ♗f5 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗e2) and both authors have 6...♗g4 as their main recommendation against the Panov System (1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.exd5 cxd5 4.c4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘f6 6.♘f3 ♗g4) – but the biggest difference is that Bologan plumps for the more popular 4...♗f5 against the 1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 dxe4 4.♘xe4 main line. I suppose that having read the Fernandez book at the same time, I miss the 'devilry' – the unusual sidelines and bizarre complications – that was present in Fernandez' book, but this is a book that will be useful for any Caro-Kann player out there. Good stuff! ■

Jan Timman

Batumi watch

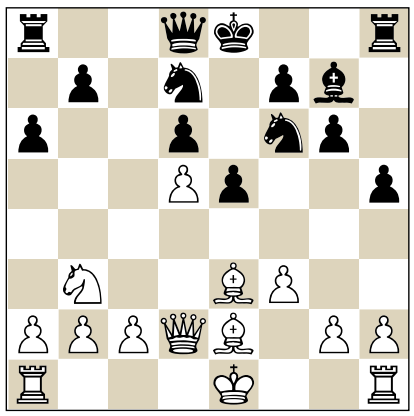
From the comfort of his home, **JAN TIMMAN** had a great time watching the key games of the Olympiad.

During the Batumi Olympiad, I followed dozens of games every day. These days big chess events are often best followed at home. You may miss the atmosphere and the tension at the venue, but it's far easier to follow a large number of games simultaneously. Many hundreds of games were played, but for me four stood out as the most spectacular ones, and coincidentally they were all first-board games. The most marvellous one was Ding Liren-Duda, which is annotated by the white player elsewhere in this issue. Another great game was Aronian-Mamedyarov, which I have annotated for the Olympiad report. The third game, Jobava-Sulskis, was full of sacrifices and unexpected turns, and you can find it in that same report with notes by the winner.

The fourth game was fascinating in all its stages:

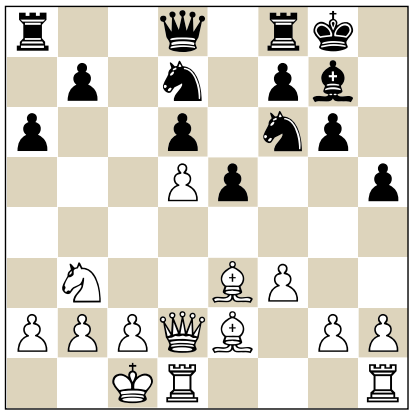
Peter Leko
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (7)
Sicilian Defence, Najdorf Variation

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 cxd4 4.♘xd4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.f3 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e6 8.♗e3 h5 9.♕d2 ♘bd7 10.♘d5 ♗xd5 11.exd5 g6 12.♗e2 ♗g7



13.0-0-0
A novelty. The normal move is 13.0-0, as in Carlsen-Vachier-Lagrave, Biel 2018. Yet the idea of castling queenside is not new. It has been played several times on move 12, e.g. by Leko himself against Ivanchuk nine years ago. And Vachier-Lagrave faced it recently against Inarkiev – and won. But there is an important difference when White castles one move later: Black has already fianchettoed his bishop, so he can no longer play it to e7. Curiously enough, White's previous move, 12.♗e2, might be viewed as a feint: it looks as if he is preparing to castle kingside, but then he changes his mind and castles queenside after all.

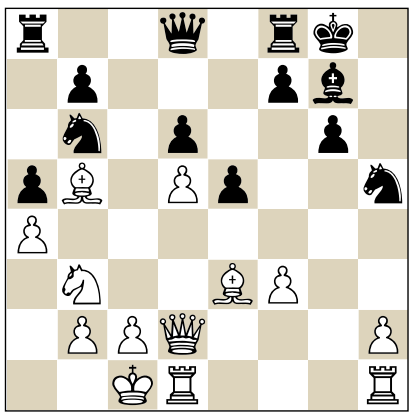
13...0-0
An important alternative is 13...b5. I wonder what Leko had prepared against this.



14.g4 Of course. White has no reason to postpone this advance.

14...a5 15.a4
A necessary measure. After 15.g5 a4 16.gxf6 axb3 Black would be better.

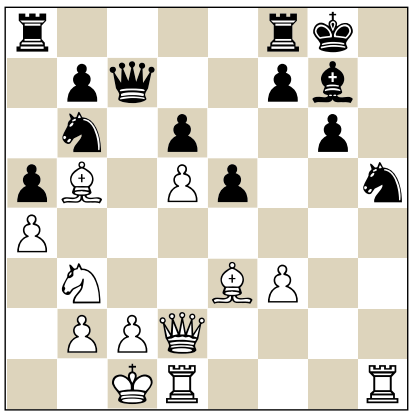
15...♘b6 16.gxh5 ♘xh5 17.♗b5



17...♘f6
A serious error. There was no reason to withdraw the knight. Black should have played the obvious 17...♕c7. Maybe Vachier-Lagrave was afraid of the endgame arising by force after 18.♕c3, in which Black is forced to defend. But this isn't as bad as it seems. After 18...♕xc3 19.bxc3 ♘c8 20.♘d2 ♘f4 21.♘c4 ♗h6, Black's passivity on the queenside will be compensated for by his strongly positioned minor pieces on the other wing.

18.h4 ♕c7 19.h5! Not exactly a difficult pawn sacrifice.

19...♘xh5

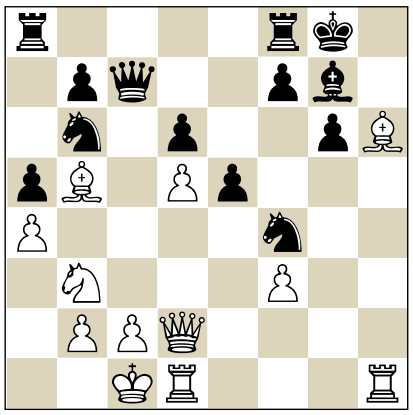


20.♗h6

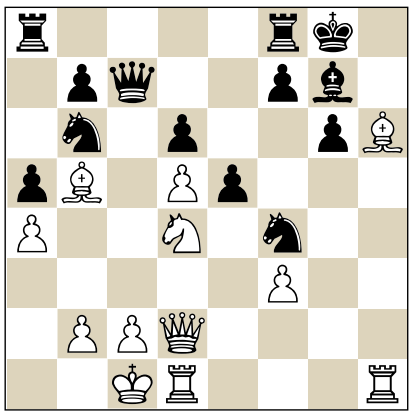
Leko fails to push on. An out-and-out attacking player would not have hesitated: the exchange sacrifice 20.♖xh5! was very strong. After 20...gxh5 21.♗h6 f5 22.♗xg7 ♕xg7 23.♕e3! Black has to give his rook. The situation after 23...♘xd5 24.♖xd5 ♖f6 25.f4 is not entirely clear, but White should be winning.

20...♘f4!

The only defence.



21.♗xf4 An obvious move, but with 21.♘d4! White might have created dangerous attacking chances. Black has two ways to defend:



NEW IN CHESS

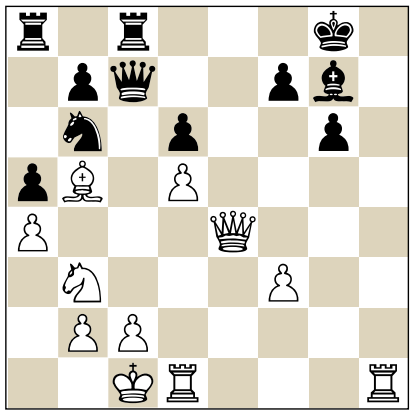
Maxime Vachier-Lagrave scored another special win with his beloved Najdorf.

– 21...♖fc8 22.♕h2 ♘bxd5 23.♗xg7 ♔xg7 24.♕h6+ ♔f6 25.♕h4+ g5 26.♕h6+ ♘g6 27.♖dg1! exd4 28.♗d3 ♘e3 (28...♔e6 29.♗xg6 ♔d7 30.♕xg5 is also clearly better for White) 29.♗xg6 ♖h8 30.♕xg5+ ♔e6 31.♖xh8 ♖xh8 32.♕f4!, with a large advantage for White. Back must not take the bishop, because after 32...fxg6 33.♖xg6+ ♔d5 34.♕g5+ he will be mated.

– 21...♗xh6! 22.♖xh6 ♘bxd5 23.♕h2 exd4 24.♖h8+ ♔g7 25.♖h7+ ♔f6 26.♕h4+ g5 27.♖h6+ ♔g7 28.♕xg5+ ♘g6 29.♗d3 ♖h8 30.♖xh8 ♖xh8 31.♕xd5, and White has recaptured the piece with advantage. But Black needn't despair yet.

21...exf4 22.♕xf4 ♖fc8 23.♕e4

White is in full control, but his attack has stalled.



23...♘xa4!?

And now Black is going for an attack! This brave piece sacrifice is a strong practical move that is objectively not clearly weaker than the obvious 23...♘c4, which would also have ensured sharp play. After 24.♘d4, Black can go 24...♘e3!, after which accurate play will guarantee White a slight advantage.

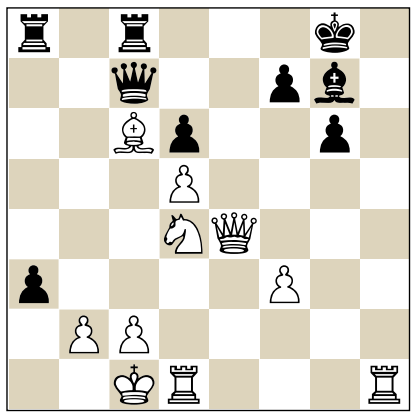
The main line goes as follows: 25.♖d2 ♘c4 26.♖g2! ♕c5 27.♖d1 ♘b6 28.c3 ♕xd5 29.♕xd5 ♘xd5 30.♘f5!, after which Black will struggle in the endgame.

24.♗xa4 b5

This was the plan. White has to take the pawn, after which the black a-pawn's road is clear.

25.♗xb5 a4 26.♘d4 a3 27.♗c6!

Absolutely the best move. White closes off the c-file, at the same time creating a strong foothold for the bishop.



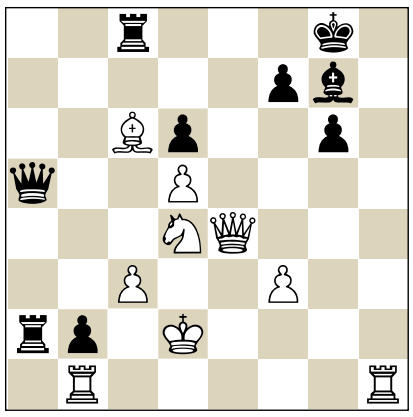
27...axb2+

An important alternative was 27...a2, intending to meet 28.♔d2 with 28...♖ab8 29.b3 ♕b6, when White has two ways to protect the knight:

– 30.♔e2 a1♕ 31.♖xa1 ♗xd4 32.♖a4 ♗f6 or 32...♗g7, with some compensation for the pawn;

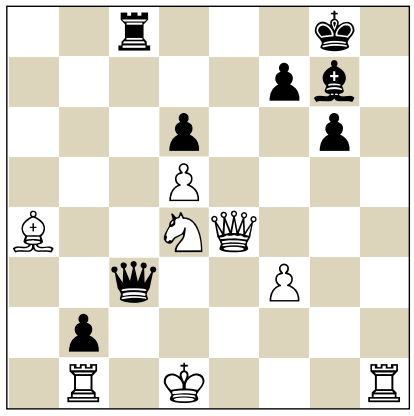
– 30.c3 ♗xd4 31.♕xd4 ♕xd4+ 32.cxd4 ♖xb3 33.♖a1 ♖b2+ 34.♔d3 ♖cb8 35.♗a4 ♖a8 36.♗c2 ♖a3+ 37.♔d2, and now Black has a choice: taking the f-pawn with 37...♖xf3, or targeting the d-pawn with 37...♖b4. In both cases, White's winning chances are open to doubt.

28.♔d2 ♖a2 29.♖b1 ♕a5+ 30.c3



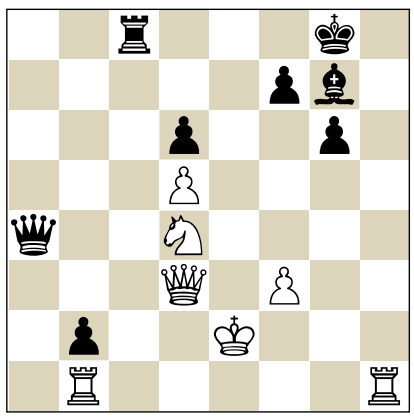
30...♖a4 A very sharp move that, although not correct, turns out to be effective in time-trouble. By sacrificing another exchange Black manages to open the position.
Objectively, 30...♖a3 was better. After 31.♕d3 ♖b8 32.♔c2 ♖a1 33.f4 ♗f6! White will not find it easy to bring his extra piece to bear. 34.f5 is met by 34...g5, and the black king remains relatively safe.

31.♗xa4 ♕xc3+ 32.♔d1
Leko had less than four minutes here, which made it difficult to choose correctly.
The other king move was stronger. After 32.♔e2 ♗xd4 33.♕d3 ♕b4 34.♕b3 ♖e8+ 35.♔d1!, Black would have had to acquiesce in an endgame. He will still win a pawn after 35...♕xb3+ 36.♗xb3 ♖e3 37.♔c2 ♖xf3, but it should be a technical win for White.



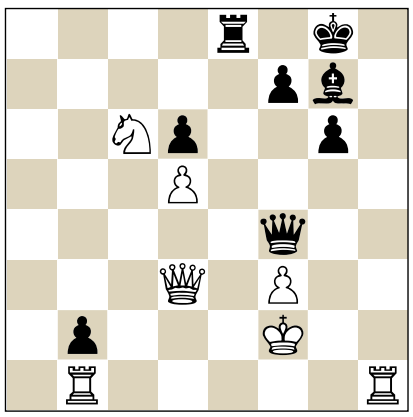
32...♕c1+ Vachier-Lagrave still had 24 minutes and played this fairly quickly. If he had taken more time, he would undoubtedly have discovered that 32...♗xd4 was his strongest option. It is important to neutralize the white knight. The position is equal, as witness this variation: 33.♗c6 f5 34.♕e6+ ♔g7 35.♕d7+ ♔f6 36.♕xd6+ ♔g7, and White has no more than perpetual check.

33.♔e2 ♕c4+ 34.♕d3 ♕xa4



35.♘c6
Square c6 was an excellent foothold for the bishop, but not for the knight! If Leko had had more than 2.5 minutes, he would undoubtedly have found the winning 35.♖h4!. White is able to maintain the central knight, because after 35...♖c4 36.♖xb2 ♗xd4 37.♖d2 the pin on the fourth rank would be deadly. 37...♕e8+ will be met by 38.♖e4.

35...♖e8+ 36.♔f2 ♕f4!
Suddenly the queen switches to the kingside. The position is dynamically balanced.



37.♖be1?
Generally speaking, it is good to go for swaps when you are ahead in material, but here things are different. Swapping rooks will lose for White, because it means giving up control of the first rank, which was necessary to

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stop the advanced black passed pawn. With 37.♖h3 or 37.♖bg1 he could have maintained the balance.

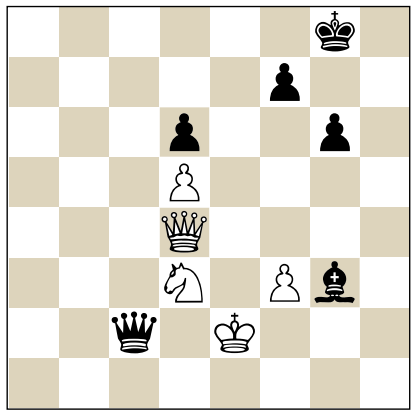
37...♖xe1 38.♖xe1 ♕h2+ 39.♔f1 ♕h1+ 40.♔f2 ♕h2+ 41.♔f1 ♗f6!

After repeating moves Vachier-Lagrave plays his trump after the time-control. The bishop is heading for h4, threatening mate on f2. Surprisingly, White has no defence, mainly because his knight is out of the action.

42.♖d1 ♗h4 43.♕d4 ♗g3!

The bishop manoeuvre has been completed. The white queen cannot protect both square b1 and f2, which means that White has to sacrifice his rook for the black passed pawn.

44.♘b4 b1♕ 45.♖xb1 ♕h1+ 46.♔e2 ♕xb1 47.♘d3 ♕c2+



Now Black not only has a solid extra pawn, but also a positional advantage. Vachier-Lagrave finishes the job with a steady hand.

48.♔f1 ♕d2 49.♕e4 ♗h4 50.f4 ♕d1+ 51.♔g2 ♕g4+ 52.♔f1 ♔f8 53.♕e3 ♕f5 54.♕f3 g5 55.♔e2 g4 56.♕g2 ♕g6 57.♕h1 ♗f6 58.♔e3 ♔g7 59.♕g2 ♗d8 60.♕b2+ ♔h7 61.♕h2+ ♔g8 62.♕b2 ♗a5 63.♕g2 ♗b6+ 64.♔e2 g3 65.♘e1 ♗a5 66.♘d3 ♔f8 67.♔e3 ♗b6+ 68.♔d2 ♕g4 69.♔c3 ♗e3 70.♔c2 ♗xf4 71.♘e1 ♗e5

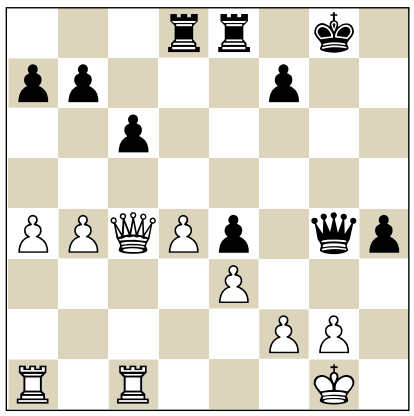
White resigned.

China owed its success not only to Ding Liren, but also to Bu Xiangzhi, who scored 7½ out of 10 on Board 4. I think Bu is often underestimated. He is a very strong player with a classical playing style. I witnessed him winning Antwerp 2008 and Helsingor 2014 with superior strength. In Batumi he sometimes managed to squeeze water from a stone.

NEW IN CHESS

Bu Xiangzhi: a very strong player with a classical style, who sometimes manages to squeeze water from a stone.

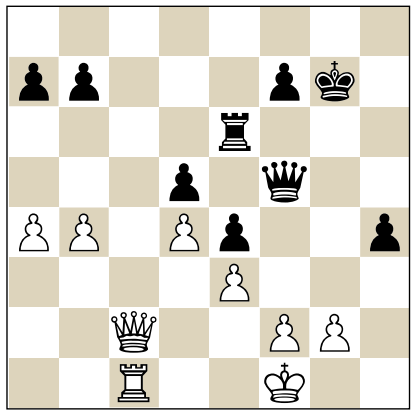
Sasa Martinovic
Bu Xiangzhi
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (4)



position after 28...♕xg4

The position is equal, and it seems that Black has little chance to get anywhere with only major pieces on the board. But Bu continues to create chances regardless.

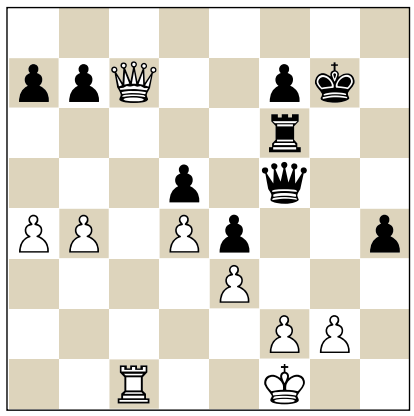
29.♔f1 ♖e6 Heading for f6 or g6. **30.♕e2 ♕g5 31.♖c5 ♖d5 32.♕c2 ♔g7 33.♖c1 ♕f5 34.♖xd5 cxd5**



35.♕c7

Sometimes it is inadvisable to be active when your king is slightly exposed. With 35.♕e2 h3 36.gxh3 ♕xh3+ 37.♔e1 ♖g6 38.♔d2, White could have held on relatively easily.

35...♖f6



36.♖c2

With 36.♕f4 White could have forced

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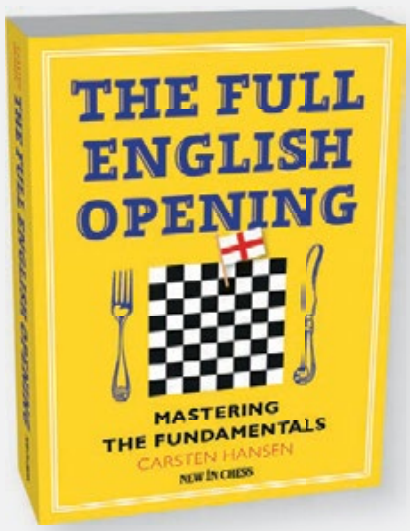

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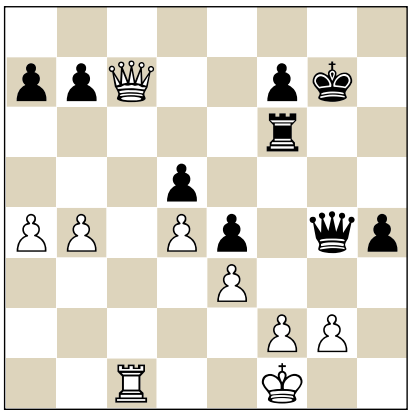
a queen swap, but it wouldn't have solved his problems.
After 36...♕xf4 37.exf4 Black forces a pawn ending with 37...♖c6!. There now follows an interesting pawn race: 38.♖c5 ♖xc5 39.dxc5 ♔f6 40.b5 ♔e6 41.g4! (otherwise White will be too late) 41...d4 42.f5+ ♔e7 43.g5 h3 44.f6+ ♔e6 45.g6 e3 46.fxe3 h2 47.♔g2 dxe3 48.g7 e2 49.g8♕ h1♕+ 50.♔xh1 e1♕+, and Black will eventually win the c-pawn, with good winning chances.

36...♕g4 37.♖c1

The only defence was 37.♖e2 ♖c6 38.♕h2, when White is doomed to passivity, but Black will not find it easy to break through the white defences.

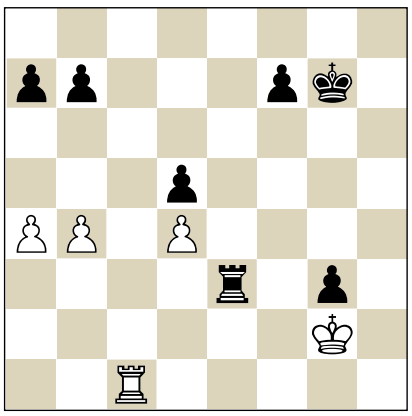


37...♕g3! Forcing a queen swap in very favourable conditions.

38.♕xg3+ hxg3 39.f3

The pawn ending after 39.♖c2 ♔g6 40.♔g1 ♖xf2 41.♖xf2 gxf2+ 42.♔xf2 ♔g5 43.♔g3 f5 is also lost for White.

39...exf3 40.gxf3 ♖xf3+ 41.♔g2 ♖xe3

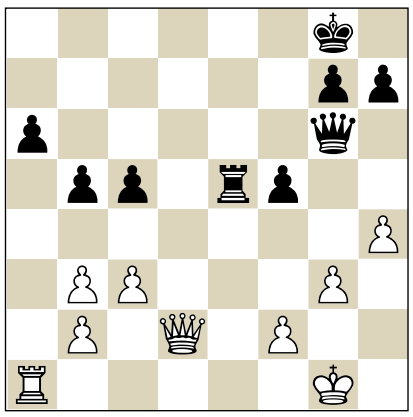


Now Black has two connected passed pawns, making for an easy win.

42.♖c7 ♔g6 43.♖xb7 f5 44.♖xa7 f4 45.♔h3 ♖e2 46.♖a8 ♔f7 47.♖a7+ ♔f6 White resigned.

Round 8 also saw an interesting major-piece endgame.

Fabiano Caruana
Shakhriyar Mamedyarov
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (8)

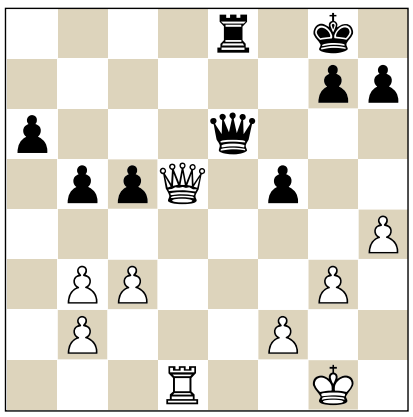


position after 30...♖xe5

This game was not only a prestige duel between the numbers two and three in the world rankings, but also a fight for first place in the tournament. Up to this point, Azerbaijan had reigned supreme, conceding only one draw. In the crucial match against the US the score was 1½-1½. A Caruana win would put the US in the lead.

31.♕d8+ ♖e8 32.♕d5+ ♕e6 33.♖d1

A practical decision. White has no objection against going for a rook ending that is not objectively winning but is very unpleasant for Black in practice. After 33.♕xc5 Black could have created counterplay with 33...f4!, e.g. 34.b4 h6 35.♖d1 ♔h8, and White cannot swap the queens.



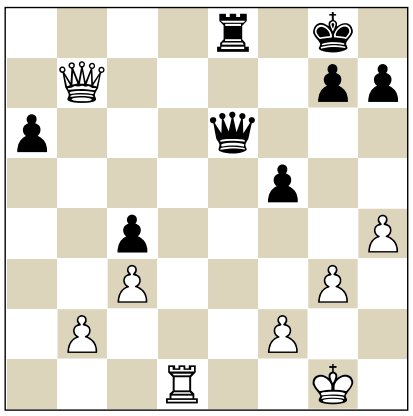
33...c4 If Mamedyarov had known what was coming, he would probably have gone for a different defence, e.g. 33...f4, which also works here. After

34.gxf4 b4 35.♔f1 ♔f7 36.♕xe6+ ♖xe6 37.♖d7+, Black has 37...♖e7!, since he needn't fear the pawn ending in view of White's scattered kingside structure. But this was hard to see over the board, of course.

But Black could have gone for the rook ending at once. After 33...♕xd5 34.♖xd5 ♖e2 35.♖xc5 ♖xb2 36.b4 g6 37.♖c7 ♖a2 38.♔g2 ♖a3 39.♔f3 a5 the draw is close.

34.bxc4 bxc4 35.♕b7!

A very strong move. Caruana is prepared to go for a rook ending, but only on his own terms.



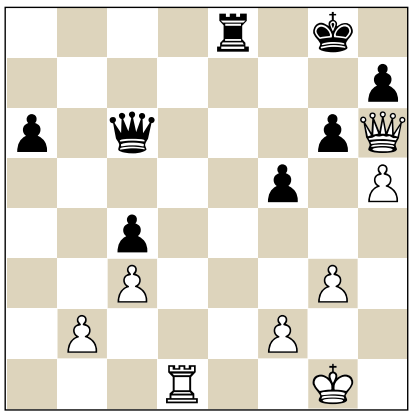
35...♖e7 The alternative was 35...♕e4, when White's best bet is 36.♖d7 to go for a rook ending. After 36...♕xb7 37.♖xb7 ♖e5 38.♔g2 a5 (the pawn ending after 38...♖b5 39.♖xb5 axb5 40.♔f3 is lost) 39.♔f3 h6 40.♔f4 ♖d5 41.h5 Black will have a very tough job defending. The passive text-move preserves the middlegame character and White can safely increase the pressure.

36.♖d8+ ♔f7 37.♕f3 g6 38.♕f4

On its way to h6.

38...♕c6 39.♖d1 ♖e4 40.♕h6 ♔g8 41.h5 A very strong advance.

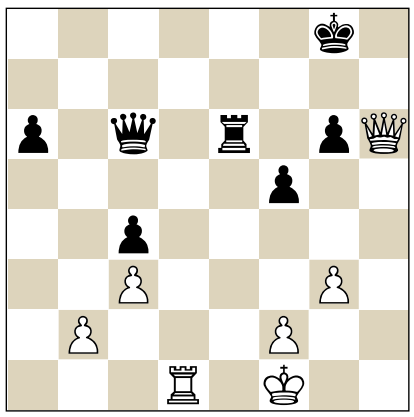
41...♖e8



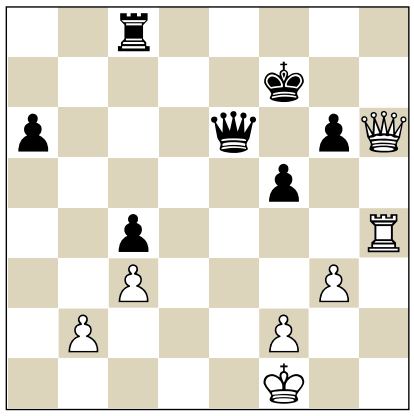
42.hxg6 White should have waited with this swap. Strong was 42.♕g5 ♕b6 43.♕d2 ♕c6, and now 44.h6!. The advanced h-pawn makes it extremely hard for Black to defend.

42...hxg6 43.♔f1 ♖e6?

Mamedyarov caves in under the pressure. His major pieces were optimally positioned for the defence, which is why he should have played a neutral move like 43...a5, when White won't find it easy to make progress. 44.♕h4 is met by 44...♔g7.



44.♕h4! Very strong in this situation. **44...♖e8 45.♖d4** Chasing the rook to a passive square. **45...♖c8 46.♕h6 ♕e6 47.♖h4 ♔f7**

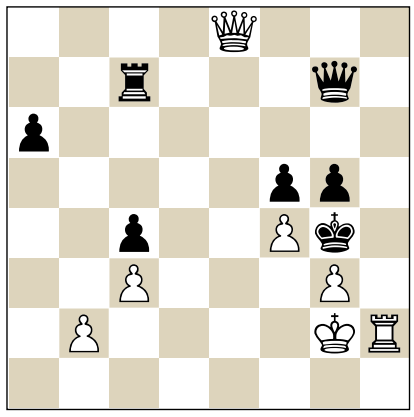


48.♕h7+ 48.♕d2, to pave the way for the rook, would also have been winning. After 48...♖e8 49.♖h7+ ♔g8 50.♕h6 ♕f6 51.♖c7, White has a devastating attack.

48...♔f6 49.♖d4 ♕e7 More tenacious was 49...♖e8, when White wins the c-pawn with 50.♕h4+ ♔g7 51.♖xc4. **50.♕h6 ♔f7 51.♕d2 ♖c7 52.♖h4 ♔f6 53.♕d4+ ♕e5 54.♕b6+ ♔g7 55.♕b8 ♔f6**

Or 55...♕d6 56.♕h8+ ♔f7 57.♖h7+ ♔e6 58.♖h6, and White wins.

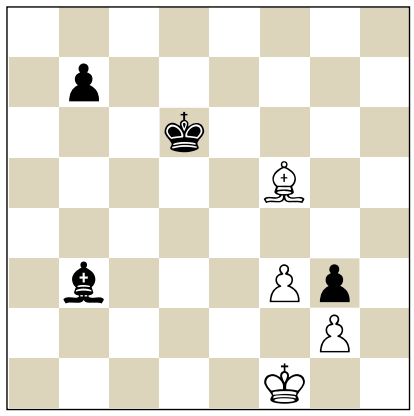
56.♕h8+ ♔e6 57.♕g8+ ♔f6 58.♖d4 ♕e7 59.♖d8 ♔g5 60.f4+ ♔h5 61.♖d2 ♕g7 62.♖h2+ ♔g4 63.♔g2 g5 64.♕e8



Black resigned.

In this same round, China beat the Netherlands with a win by Bu Xiangzhi over Van Wely (see Anish Giri's annotation in the Batumi report). The victory could have been even bigger if Yu Yangyi had won the following endgame.

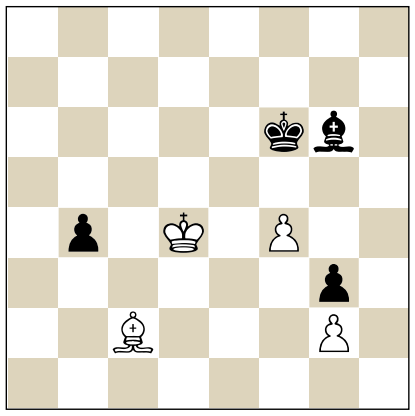
Erwin l'Ami
Yu Yangyi
Batumi Olympiad 2018 (8)



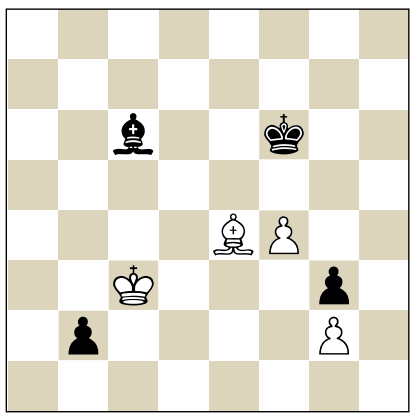
position after 53...♗xb3

Not much is happening in this bishop ending. Many players surely would have settled for a draw, especially when it would have clinched match victory. But Yu Yangyi keeps plugging away.

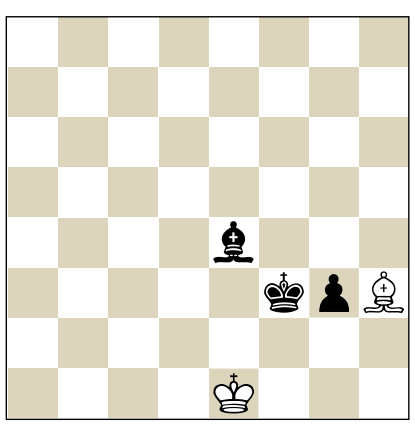
54.♔e2 b5 55.♔e3 b4 56.♔d4 ♗d1 57.♗e4 ♗b3 58.♗d3 ♗d5 59.♗e4 ♗e6 60.f4 ♗f7 61.♗f3 ♗a2 62.♗e4 ♔e6 63.♗h7 ♔f6 64.♗c2 ♗e6 65.♗e4 ♗f7 66.♗c2 ♗g6



67.♗d1? Lulled to sleep by all the manoeuvring. White makes the decisive error. 67.♗b3 or 67.♗a4 should have secured the draw.
67...♗e8!
Now it suddenly turns out that White cannot stop the b-pawn from advancing, since his bishop is tied to the long diagonal to prevent 68...♗c6.
68.♗f3 b3 69.♗e4 b2 70.♔c3 ♗c6



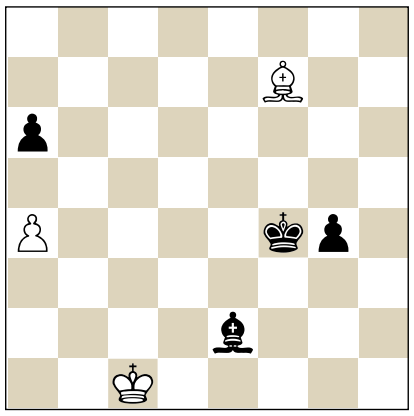
The white bishop is overloaded.
71.♗d3 ♗xg2 72.♔xb2 ♗c6 73.♗f1 ♔f5 74.♔c3 ♔xf4 75.♔d2 ♔f3 76.♔e1 ♗e4 77.♗h3



77...♗f5? Just when the win is within reach, Black fails to clinch it. He could have won as follows: 77...♗d3 78.♗f1 ♗f5 79.♗a6 ♔g2 80.♗b7+ ♔h2, and Black takes his bishop to g2.

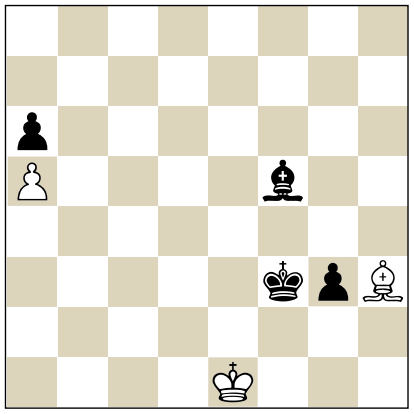
78.♗xf5 g2 79.♗e4+! A subtle way to save himself. **79...♔xe4 80.♔f2 ♔f4 81.♔xg2** Draw.

I was only too familiar with the turn at the end of the game, because it was exactly like the end of one of my endgame studies. That same evening I mailed this study to L'Ami.



Jan Timman
2.hm Nestorescu JT Gambit 2010
White to play and win

The first thing White must do is take his king closer to the action.
1.♔d2 ♗f3 Not 1...♔f3 in view of 2.♗h5, with a draw.
2.a5! It is extremely important to fix the black a-pawn on the colour of its bishop.
2...g3 3.♔e1 ♔e3 4.♗c4! Going for an ancient and very familiar turn. 4.♔f1 was insufficient in view of 4...♔d4!, and Black will capture the a-pawn.
4...♗e2! After 4...g2 White can go for stalemate with 5.♗f1!.
5.♗d5 ♗c4 6.♗g2! The only square for the bishop. After 6.♗b7? ♔d4! 7.♗g2 ♔c3, Black would target the a-pawn again.
6...♗d3 Now 6...♔d4 wouldn't yield anything in view of 7.♔d2.
7.♗h3 ♔f3 8.♗f1! Given the circumstances, White can go for the pawn ending.
8...♗e4! 9.♗h3 ♗f5 Not a blunder in this case, but a last-ditch attempt.



10.♗xf5! L'Ami's salvation. Certainly not 10.♗f1? ♗c8!, with a deadly mutual zugzwang.
10...g2 11.♗e4+! ♔xe4 12.♔f2 Draw. If Black goes for the a-pawn, the white king will be back on the queenside in time.

Later that evening, I got a message back from Batumi. L'Ami wrote: 'Definitely interesting that with a5/a6 included the position is drawn. Unimaginable what happened towards the end, but I must say I had respect for the way he outplayed me in the stage previous to this one.'

It can safely be said that this respect extends to the entire Chinese team, especially in the last phase of the Olympiad. Theirs was an enthusiastic, purposeful and professional performance. ■

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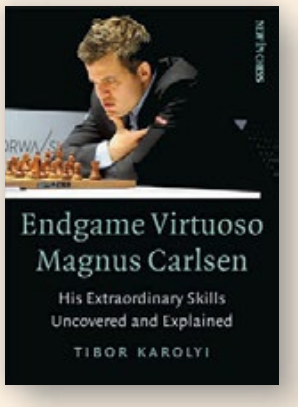

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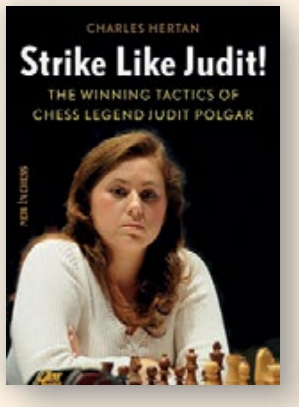

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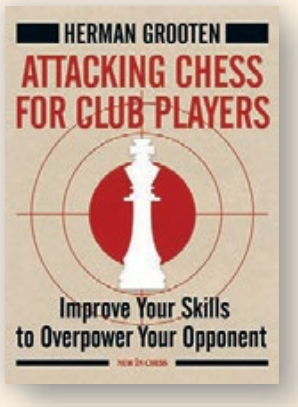

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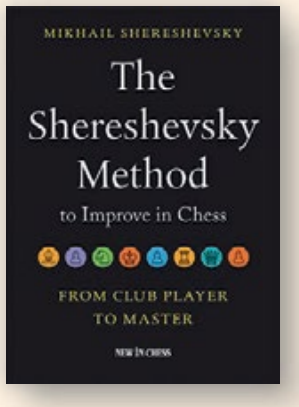

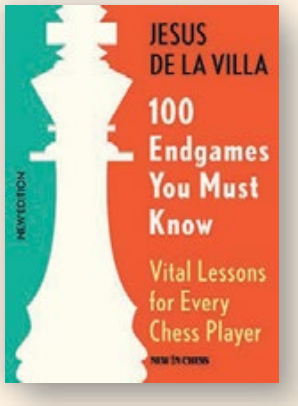

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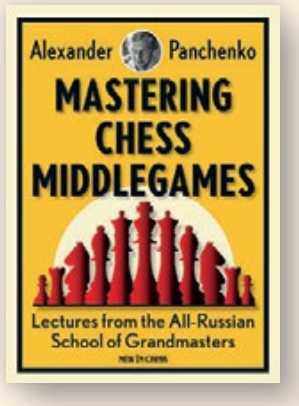

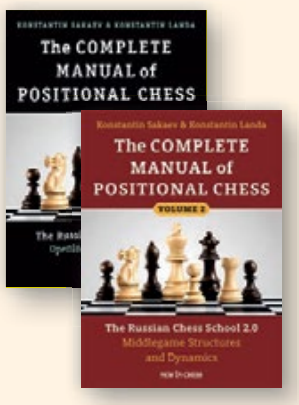

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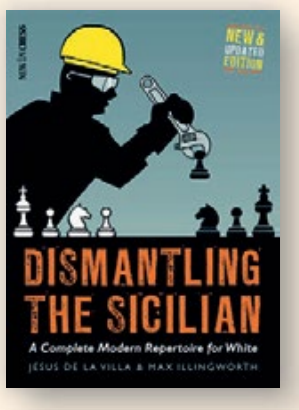

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Just Checking

Jan-Krzysztof Duda

CURRENT ELO: 2739

DATE OF BIRTH: April 26, 1998

PLACE OF BIRTH: Krakow, Poland

PLACE OF RESIDENCE: Krakow, Poland

What is your favourite city?
Krakow.

What was the last great meal you had?
The steak I had last Friday comes to mind.

What drink brings a smile to your face?
It depends on my mood, but Ice Tea (must be peach) is always nice.

Which book would you give to a dear friend?
To a chess-playing friend, definitely a volume of Kasparov's series. Otherwise it would be a problem ☺.

What book is currently on your bedside table?
One on human anatomy. University stuff.

What is your all-time favourite movie?
The Godfather, the *Star Wars* saga, *The Terminator* (1, 2), some Polish comedies.

And your favourite TV series?
I am not really into series, but recently I watched the first three Narcos seasons with interest.

Do you have a favourite actor?
Leonardo DiCaprio, but also old martial art masters like Bruce Lee or Jean-Claude Van Damme.

And a favourite actress?
Let's say Monica Bellucci.

What music do you listen to?
Actually everything, but mainly English pop/rock.

Is there a work of art that moves you?
I appreciate old art, with its perfectionism. And some avant-garde paintings, but something like Malevich's *Black Square* is really hard to understand ☺.

Who is your favourite chess player of all time?
Of modern players, Magnus Carlsen. He has ruled for such a long time, and also changed people's attitude to openings.

What was your best result ever?
Probably becoming Polish champion.

And the best game you played?
I love the ♖d3-♖g3 trick against Steinberg in Batumi 2006, when I was eight years old. But it's easier to say what my worst game was – against Savchenko in Riyadh Blitz 2017.

What is your favourite square?
Do you see this knight on f5? For some reason, the f4-square is not appreciated in the same manner.

Do chess players have typical shortcomings?
They sometimes are very aloof, considering themselves to be 'walking encyclopaedias'. Also, they sometimes have health issues linked to bad posture.

Do you have any superstitions concerning chess?
When I win, I do everything exactly in the same way: eat the same food, have the same shirt/pen, etc. This can become a problem when you win too much.

Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or?
Facebook.

How many friends do you have on Facebook?
Honestly, no idea. I guess around 300.

Who do you follow on Twitter?
I don't have Twitter.

What is your life motto?
I'm a free man.

When were you happiest?
Perhaps when I passed the 'matura' exams (equivalent to finishing high school).

When was the last time you cried?
Possibly when I failed in some last round. I try to be a man, and don't cry ☺.

Who or what would you like to be if you weren't yourself?
Someone very rich, who isn't fixated on amassing more fortune.

Which three people would you like to invite for dinner?
Albert Einstein, Jozef Pilsudski, Julius Caesar.

What is the best piece of advice you were ever given?
To become a good chess player, I need to broaden my horizons in other areas.

What is your greatest fear?
That I may land in hell after death.

Is a knowledge of chess useful in everyday life?
I don't think so, but as I wrote earlier, you are super-smart in other people's eyes.

What is the best thing that was ever said about chess?
I like this quote of Jan Gustafsson's: 'Chess is a constant struggle between my desire not to lose and my desire not to think.' So real ☺.

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